

THE WIRE

Wilco

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WWW.THEWIRE.CO.UK ISSUE 246 AUGUST 2004 £3.80



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The Masthead

"An unfortunate elitism places song at the periphery of music's artistry," writes *Wire* contributor Philip Brophy in the introduction to his book *200 Modern Soundtracks* (BFI Publishing, reviewed by Ken Hollings in Print Run), "as if song's ephemeral, transitory and disposable nature defeats meaning, significance or statement." Sadly Philip's book was published a few months too late for this part of his introductory argument to have been incorporated in *The Wire*'s recent cover feature on the State Of Song (issue 243), but his contention about the song's social marking set me thinking that maybe something of the snobbery he's alluding to is what prevented me picking up on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* by this month's cover stars Wilco (see Edwin Pouncey's story on page 30) when it was first released in 2002.

In his disquisition on song and cinema (please note that I'm quoting from just one and a half pages from Brophy's book – the rest of it is just as engaging, occasionally illuminating and never less than stimulating), Philip goes on to chastise film aesthetes for their failure to recognise song as fabric rather than form. He writes, "Its patterning is the result of complex macro-structural activity, wherein overall effect arises from a less discernible organisation of

collective energies."

Whatever Philip's specific meaning in relation to his film argument, his definition of the fabric of song perfectly applies to *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. Even so, it was the two extended "experimental" tracks, the loopy, Krautrock-driven "Spiders (Kidsmoke)" and the slowly mushrooming drone piece "Less Than You Think", on their latest album *A Ghost Is Born*, that prompted *The Wire* to listen more closely to a group that I for one still had pegged as an all Country outfit, long after they had evolved into something altogether more sonically fascinating. *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* finds the group constructing rock songs from myriad electronic textures and threads, in collaboration with Wilco mainman Jeff Tweedy's friend Jim O'Rourke. (Together with present Wilco drummer Glenn Kotche, the pair also play out in the occasional trio *Loose Fur*.)

Back to the beginning of his anti-elitist argument, Philip writes, "Opera is allowed song – but via the pure and controlled streaming of known mythological shapes through dramatic exposition. The 'phantom voicing' of the libretto is replicated in the builing diaphragms of its singers whose contralto implies that the purity of their un-breathed tone allows 'pure'

musical narrative form to be anunciated spiritually." Put another way, your average d*ck's loaisy diction here opens lovers sustain the illusion that the hours of turgid exposition they're being subjected to is somehow superior to, say, a minor yet fabulous song, from *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* called "Heavy Metal Drummer".

Here Jeff Tweedy recalls all the fun the boys rocking out in "shiny shiny pants" seemed to be having while he was seeking out the meier-loving company of the post-punk hardcore set. The song may be slight compared to the two aforementioned marathon workouts on *A Ghost Is Born* but it tells plenty in the way its sweetly humorous and self-mocking tone alerts listeners to the snobbery permeating the purportedly anti-hierarchical world of alternative rock while immersing them in *Metrop's* vulgar pleasures.

Of course, the very quality of song is what appeals to Philip, as indeed it ought to the rest of us. "Song is an expression of the vernacular, the vulgar and the vocal," he proclaims, "and like a healthy breeding unit, it facilitates the production of more song." In the incubator of a group like Wilco's imagination, long may the song continue to proliferate.

CHRIS BOHN

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The *Wire* is published twice yearly by The Wire Magazine Ltd.
Printed by AP Finer Inc. • Digital imaging by GMP Digital (www.gmpdigital.com)

USA: The *Wire* (USPS 002-0680) twice yearly \$10.00 per issue. \$10.00 per year by a US newsagent. Magazine postage paid at New York, New York Post Office. Periodicals postage paid at Woburn, Mass 01888. Postmaster: Please send address changes to: The Wire Magazine, 101 Pitt St, 17th Fl, Sydney NSW 2000, Australia. Postage paid at New York, NY 10007. Second class postage paid at Woburn, Mass 01888. Please allow 4-6 weeks for change of address changes.

The *Wire* was founded in 1984 by Anthony Wilson. Between 1984-2000 it was part of *Not All Bad* & *Friends* Group. In December 2000 it was purchased in a management buy-out by the *Wire* and the *Not All Bad* & *Friends* group. The *Wire* is now an independent publication.

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Adventures In Modern Music

Issue 246 August 2004
£3.60
ISSN 0952-0680 (USPS 006231)

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Declan O'Neill, Sievige Penol, Anna Bohm, Jon Tikiag,
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Subscriptions (see page 90)

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PAGES 02 (inside)
UK £2.99
Europe £3.60
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Letters

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Remembering Steve

It goes without saying that in our small and fragile music community, the loss of a musician/poet/philosopher/teacher/friend like Steve Lacy is without measure. Perhaps not reason.

Anyone who knew him, listened to him, loved him made music with him was forever transformed. He was no ordinary jazzman, composer or performer – he was no ordinary anything; he was an unpredictable, non-nonsense volcano of invention, a master magician who could pull rabbits out of his soprano sax as if they were mere multiphonic squawks. To do this he always wore a conundrum jacket, usually brown or beige. He was a New York street urchin who played "Clément Marmalade" with Max Kaminsky in the 50s until he was reborn with Cecil and Thelonious and became one of the first white musicians to be accepted in the black community. He even landed on the doorstep of the MEV (Musica Electronica Viva) studio in Rome in 1968 and whitewashed the entire old brick iron-factory with millions of notes of such exquisite design that our anarchistic scratching and howling has found a perfect antagonist. His wacky melodic contours and his liberating honks, bleeps and chirps gave our music "class", bringing it straight out of the utopian ravers of raw waste into a sophisticated balleroom of revolutionary polyphony. A Daxeland Italiaca that could have only been born on the banks of the Tiber in the late 60s.

Much of this history is known, written about and even recorded. What is not known is how Steve and his wife Irene Aebi lived some very hard times in those glorious days in Rome – finally giving up altogether to move to a real city (Paris), where their musical life took a much deserved positive turn. I well remember those infinite tunas Steve wrote every day, the hours of practice to master his instrument, the experiments with time, noise, silence, human breath. Steve was a living fable-book, and wrote volumes of pieces during his curtailed lifetime. He was a born thief who stole time, frequencies, contours and air and repackaged them from the end of his horns and sold them for pennies at musical fleamarkets all over the world. His musical generosity is legendary: the more one took, the more Steve gave, but like Buddha, he understood silence, non-action and endless waiting just to re-enter with one single enlightened tone.

Unlike the music makers most of us are, Steve was making his living performing almost every night of his life in places many of us would find unhealthy or dangerous or both; later and more frequently he found himself invited into the gilded warmth of luxurious concert halls and often into the crossover worlds of

composed and improvised music, but he never missed a chance to return to the dives and clubs where he had met and played with more poets and saints than found in the Christian, Jewish or Muslim calendars combined.

Alvin Curran Rome, Italy

I hear you knocking

Re: the review of Arthur Doyle & Horndrake's *Your Spirit Is Calling (Jazz & Improv, The Wire 243)*: I can't blame Ed Pouncey for his negative words about that magical duo studio recording; not everybody is lucky enough to be attuned to such a high level of expression and creativity. Arthur spoke a unique and very personal language which'd be difficult for most to understand.

Edwin says that after *Alibame Feeling* Arthur never really recovered from that session. How do you compare two records nearly 30 years apart? I'd like to see him live a hard life as Arthur did for the last 30 years, and be sure that he has never drowned, even when he was put into jail for five years (it later transpired he was falsely accused). He is real, man! He deserves max respect! And he is not babbling but talking to the spirits. Much proof exists on how well he has "recovered" in recent years: check *Conspiracy Nation* with The Electro-Acoustic Ensemble for something different, or duos with Sunny Murray or *Prayer For Peace* or *Live in Japan* '97 with Mizutani and Toyozumi and judge for yourself on how much his raw force has diminished. So I wonder: does Pouncey really know Arthur Doyle's music? His *Songbook*? I have a couple of other records of Arthur's Electro-Acoustic Ensemble to release next year (one with guests Daniel Carter and Perry Robinson), and you'll see: they'll blow you mind, brothers!

I'd like to write a few words about Hamid too. He was very happy about that rare session, for the music and for having met such a deep spiritual brother. It was my personal bet; to arrange a meeting of these two bright souls, and for sure it was not an easy task. They recognise/hug each other immediately and talked the same language right on the spot. Finally, this is not, as written, a CD but an LP, vinyl only! Anyway, for sure, Pouncey's spirit didn't receive a call, unfortunately....

Emanuele Pinotti Qorco, Milan, Italy

Obscure alternatives

It's good of Steve Beresford (Letters, The Wire 244) to mention Gentle Fire's *Electrola LP*. As a member of this long defunct group, I know that my former

colleagues would be happy for it to be reissued. Indeed, interest in the group's work seems to be increasing! For the lack of any offer to reissue this LP, after several years of intermittent planning we are hoping to issue two separate CDs of the group's work by this time next year, using recordings in our archive. No less than a triple album is planned by an Italian label, which would include three of our Group Compositions, a work by each member of the group and works by other composers – e.g. Stockhausen, Cage (unfortunately not the *Music For Amplified Toy Piano*, as we only performed it once, in the recording studio), Earle Brown, Christian Wolff and Ildikó Nagy. Plus, if that is not sufficient, a fourth Group Composition is likely to appear on the *Anomalous* label, in the new series of recordings from the 1972 ICES Festival in London that started with the ANIM recording (an interesting recording of the group Naked Software was made the same festival, but one member has vetoed its release).

On a parallel track, I was pleased to see Walter Smetak briefly discussed in your *Invisible Jukebox* with Vincius Contidu in the same issue, because few people in Europe seem to be aware of his work. He was a pioneer inventor of new acoustic instruments, based in Brazil, who died in 1984, and strongly influenced the rather better known group Ustek. Biographical info and other texts (in Portuguese, Spanish and English) and photos of Smetak's instruments can be found at www.gilbertogil.com.br/smetak/estatutak0.htm and an article about his work (in Spanish and German) at www.ishnamerica-musica.net/frame.html (select Smetak under "Compositions"). Two LPs were issued: Smetak on Brazilian Phrases, and *Instruogro* on Marcus Pereira (thanks to Luke Fowler for this info). Unusual but highly commendable is the support Smetak and Ustek received from popular Brazilian musicians; witness the name of Gilberto Gil in the first Website, and he and Caetano Veloso were involved in the production of Smetak's first LP, while Milton Nascimento collaborated early on with Ustek. Smetak would be another excellent candidate for reissue on CD.

Hugh Davies London, UK

Corrections

Issue 245: Kazuo Shibutani is Tsugaru shamisen master Chusaku Yamata's heir, not as stated in The Masthead. In *On Location*, Heather Leigh Murray should have been credited for the Glasgow Tryptych photos. Issue 244: Anuradha Roy is female, not male, as stated in the *The Compiler* review of *Un Autre Monde Est Possible*. □

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News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler



Chicago bound: Ghost

Following the success of last year's *Adventures In Modern Music Festival*, co-curated by The Wire and Chicago's Empty Bottle club, the line-up for this year's follow-up event has just been announced. Taking place between 22-26 September at the Empty Bottle, the festival promises to be another humdinger with five nights featuring four artists per night. The line-up is as follows: Boom Bip, Oxbow, Axel Dörner/François Houzanger/Kathy Rowe, Leafcutter John (22 September); Gift Of Gab, Scion, Lasse Marhaug, David Redfearn/Tried (23); Borbetomagus, Telefon Tel Aviv, Pauli Niisan-Love/Ken Vandermark, The Onyx And Future Herds (from Jewelled Antler Collective) (24); Thomas Brinkmann, Sightings, Keith Fullerton Whitman, Entrance (25); and Ghost, Xu Xu, Nozagi, Double Leopards (26). www.emptybottle.com >> Wire contributor Christopher Cox, together with Daniel Warner, is the editor of a new book that brings together significant writings on contemporary music practice from the past century. *Audio Culture: Readings In Modern Music* collects essays, chapters and articles by a wide range of writers which track the development of crucial themes in the shaping of avant garde sound and music making. Authors include Brian Eno, John Cage, John Zorn, Derek Bailey, David Toop, Michael Nyman, Steve Reich and Simon Reynolds. The book also features contributions from authors drawn from outside music: Umberto Eco, William Burroughs, Jacques Attali, Theodor Adorno and Marshall McLuhan. *Audio Culture* looks set to become an invaluable source book, enshrinning developing notions of chance, experimentation, sonic and noise theory, and critical insight. It is published in September by Continuum Books (www.continuumbooks.com) >> Talking of Brian Eno, everyone's favourite sound theorist has just been reunited on record with guitarist Robert Fripp for the first time since their groundbreaking brace of duo albums recorded in the 1970s, *No Pussyfooting* and *Evening Star*. Released on CD by Fripp's Discipline Global Mobile label, *The Equatorial Stars* is a return to the Ambient model of their earlier work. As the title

suggests, it also carries echoes of Eno's space excursion from 1982, *Apollo: Atmospheres And Soundtracks*. The sound was arrived at by accident, according to Eno: "Somehow my shoe nudged the little red button on the little black box with the little green lights. That button told the little box to tell the digital recorder that we would be recording in a manner far too tedious to explain when in fact we intended to record quite differently, in a manner also far too tedious to explain." Eno is also at work on a new song album, although no date is set for its release. Fripp has been playing live dates in Europe with these Pagans of the guitar, Joe Satriani and Steve Vai. www.discordglobalmobile.com and www.enoshop.co.uk >> American free jazz bassist Kent Carter and his Danish wife, dancer Michèle Marcus, were recently detained by French authorities in connection with some tenants of theirs who were renting a cottage in the remote countryside area of rural France where they live. In March this year they were cold-called from a tourist office and informed of two individuals who wished to rent their guest house for a month. It turned out their paying guests were leading lights of the Basque separatist organisation ETA. On the night of 2 April, both the guest house and Carter's home were raided, and all occupants taken to police headquarters in Paris, where they were held overnight. When it became clear that Carter and Marcus were innocent parties, they were freed, separately, but with no phones or money. Thankfully they were able to reunite through their son, who lives in Paris. However, they are forbidden to leave France, and they are even confined to their home village, while the French police continue to hold important personal possessions like their passports and computers. These actions have left them unable to keep track of their finances or accept any work outside the immediate vicinity. They are currently talking to lawyers about clearing their names and retrieving their possessions and liberty. Meanwhile, any messages of support can be sent to kcarter@club-internet.fr

>> British improvist Mike Cooper, who has lived in Rome for some years, reports that his 12 June show with New York's *No-Neck Blues Band* at Rome's Astro Occupato was disrupted by fascist infiltrators. Clad in helmets and face masks, the far right inscreams announced their attack with a smoke bomb, before benging in armed with iron bars and wooden sticks. Several bystanders received injuries, and the venue's entrance and bar were trashed along with No-Neck's rented tour van >> The Pet Shop Boys are set to soundtrack Sergei Eisenstein's revolutionary film masterpiece *Battleship Potemkin*, at a free concert and screening in London's Trafalgar Square on Sunday 12 September, 8:30pm. The duo have written a mostly instrumental suite for the event, at which their electronics will be accompanied by the strings of The Dresden Sinfoniker. www.ics.org.uk >> German duo A Certain Ratio have been in Afghanistan working on music and education projects. The group Burke Band arose out of their collaboration with drummer Saska Von Kitzing and a young music student called Nurgis, playing a drum hidden for six years during the Taliban regime. Nurgis also supplies vocals, along with two passers-by who got in on the act. The resulting music, originally released as a vinyl 7" by Berlin's Monika label, is now incorporated into Burke Band's four track Burke Blue EP, which also includes some video footage, set for 23 August release on Alte Tatk. www.attak.com >> Originally recorded on a cassette machine during the Lou Reed-led Velvet Underground's last run in August 1970, and then released as an afterthought in 1972, *Live At Max's Kansas City* has now been remastered by Rhino/Atlantic as a double CD with seven extra tracks, plus sleeve notes by poet Jim Carroll. A mixed blessing, considering the original's barely bootleg quality. The sound might have been touched up but the performances – with Moe Tucker away on maternity leave – are as lacklustre and indifferent as they were first time round, regardless of the run's historical significance. □



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bands over the Box

BEIJING ROCKS. BY JIM BUTLER



Hang On The Box (from left): Yi Li Na, Shen Jing, Wang Yue and Xiao Gan

"In China, it's hard to get recognised," explains Shen Jing, drummer with Beijing post-punk quartet Hang On The Box. "You can imagine how difficult it is to play music here, especially for girls. Being musicians for more than a couple of years is seen as an embarrassment. Abroad, a band can play for ten years or more before becoming successful, but in China it's different. It's common for bands to play together for two or three years and then break up.

"I don't think Chinese people understand our music," she adds. "They don't need us – the world needs us."

Hang On The Box have already weathered enough crises to sink a lesser group. Bassist Yi Li Na left and returned, original guitarist Fan Ying quit after a US tour and worst of all, on the eve of their first UK dates last year, they were refused permission to leave China. They were, deemed their government, an inappropriate representation of Chinese culture. "We were almost beaten back then," admits Shen Jing. "But we long to get more promotion in Europe, especially Britain. We've always really wanted to play there. When our tour was cancelled, one reason we decided to continue was so that dream could still come true."

The group formed six years ago, when still in their teens. Early gigs at Beijing's legendary Scream Club were explosions of noise and wordless shrieks. The place was routinely packed – no one had seen girls behaving like that before, and indeed, there have been no others daring to follow since. Their howl of discontent carried across the sea to Tokyo, where the Benten label liked what it heard and agreed to record them. Released in 2002, their first album *Yellow Banana* revealed a gift for melodic invention and stringing lyrical hook-songs. But this wasn't just another cute, colourful trawl through the English-Chinese dictionary for swear words. The album offers glimpses of alienation and frustration that can sear the soul if they catch you right. Their second album *Di, Di* (as in LSD-DD, released in 2003) marked a giant

leap forward, its gorgeous pop sensibilities perfectly capturing the moody melancholy that also permeates the films of Wong Kar Wai and Jia Zhang Ke. At their centre is an indefinable discontent, a realisation that the usual retreats of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll now only serve to break you level. This is not about debauchery or hedonism – it is about forgetting.

Last year's release of their first European album, the compilation *For Every Punk Bitch & Arsehole*, attracted some high profile fans. The *Year Mean Years*' Karen O has voiced her acclaim on their bulletin board, perhaps sensing in vocalist Wang Yue an Eastern counterpart: "I wanna refuse you." Wang Yue confides on the bruised "Spring Out", "Refuse your love/Refuse your best/Allow you to fuck another girl/What am I afraid of?/I'm afraid of nothing/Stay in now/Don't touch me/I'm Mars."

Behind everything is a sense of invisibility, either of being yearned for or fought against. "My loneliness comes because I live on the other side of this world," offers Shen Jing eloquently. "It's normal, but the world's not normal to me. Sometimes when I'm on the street, I feel like I'm made of glass. I can see everyone, but no one can see me." Right now this feeling is particularly acute. Music reaches Beijing via the Internet and imported magazines, and the group picked up on raves of ESG and James Chance just as quickly as any number of their No Wave influences contemporaries in the West. "I can't bear to find some new band with yet another fake punk angle," Wang Yue relates, revealing her palpable frustration at Hang On The Box's relative invisibility. "At the moment we are looking for a suitable record company to record our third album." They'd have a new guitarist, Xiao Gan, and a fresh batch of songs they're itching to release. Xiao Gan is an old friend and, perhaps surprisingly, a man. "I'd be happy if more people would just think of us as a band per se," declares Yi Li Na. "We have gone beyond being a girl band. We want to keep the

inspiration of being female musicians, but at the same time be recognised as just an awesome group."

"We plan to keep a modern, experimental sound," Shen Jing enthuses about their new material. "The idea is to let people know that they're listening to Hang On The Box, but also to keep incorporating new elements into that sound. Something like Kraftwerk – you can always recognise them, but they have the ability to create music that's far ahead of everyone else." The change of guitarist has given the group an edgier, more minimal sound, with occasional megaphone vocals and subtle touches of electronics adding depth and texture to the soundscape. "Shanghai" even manages to include some funky MC-ing and a Krasnrock-inspired vocal jam over the course of its seven minutes.

The absorption of such a wide range of influences stems from the group's utter dedication to their music. Is life for Hang On The Box any different since the release of their first album? "I don't think anything has changed," replies Wang Yue. "Unless you count becoming poorer." Yi Li Na echoes these sentiments. "The only thing that never changes is our crazy passion for music and our love without money."

It's hard not to admire such attitudes – hard, too, to really comprehend the sacrifices and tribulations that have been made and endured in the name of making music like theirs in China. There is a revelatory moment at the end of "There Is A City" when the group break into a chant of "free, free, free" and suddenly you catch the sound of their voices, something largely unspoken and more powerful for it being implied. For a second you glimpse the dimensions of their dreams and at the same time know that what you feel is only the smallest percentage of their longing. And you know why they are hanging on. □ For *Every Punk Bitch And Arsehole* is out now on Arivederci Baby. [HOTB Website](http://www.hangonthobox.com):

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BETH ANDERSON



G'ER THE HILL, AND SWALES.
BY JULIAN GOWLEY

"All my pieces are based firmly in personal experience and the sounds or accents of the places and people I've met," observes composer Beth Anderson, born in Kentucky, now based in Brooklyn. Two recent releases have documented the germination of those sounds and accents into dramatically differing forms. *Peachy Keen-O* (*Pogus*) collects her experimental music and sound-text works from the 1970s, while *Swales And Angels* (*New World*) offers a selection of unapologetically attractive chamber music written between 1985 and 2000.

Turbulent electronic shadowing of a Kentucky auctioneer's rapid verbal delivery on *Ode* (1975) or the sonically challenging physicality of the intrinsically loud organ piece *Tower Of Power* (1973) seem remote from the elegant neo-Romanticism of Anderson's writings for string quartet, yet there's continuity in her concern to make music that's direct and affecting. "In school it was not taught, and not suggested that one's music should be personal," Anderson continues. "Music was taught as though it was conceptual and disconnected from time and place. I do not agree that music must be abstract."

The covers to both CDs depict fertile grassland with trees. For Anderson, Brooklyn's Prospect Park takes the place of open countryside, but she has chosen the word *swale* to designate the form she now favours. It means marshy ground or meadow hosting a variety of plants, and that well suits her musical material, which is intuitively conceived then cut up and juxtaposed as collage. "I'm not imitating a tree or some particular natural structure," she comments. "I am just doing what comes naturally to me. The sort of collages I make now grew out of my life experience — musically, financially, psychologically, how I experience entertainment, my reaction to my education, what I hear around me, my grandmother's crazy quilts, flipping around many television and radio channels,

Roxus collage, eclectic architecture, interior design and fashion, a certain period in Frank Stella's paintings, I love Kentucky fiddle music, all folk music. I love Ralph Vaughan Williams. My work with dancers returned me to meter."

John Cage was a formative influence. Anderson took classes with him at the University of California, Davis in 1969. "He told stories and brought us mushrooms from his gatherings," she recalls. "We performed his music and Satie's *Vexations*." More importantly, Cage's radical aesthetic provided a liberating example for Anderson's approach to composition. This was consolidated during postgraduate study in the adventurous early 1970s climate of Mills College, Oakland. There she studied Cyclo Composition with Terry Riley, learning the basics of Indian raga singing from the tradition of Pandit Pran Nath. Riley was influential for her later development, she notes, in that "he was the only teacher I had who used pitches in a straightforward way, floated in a liquid of sound".

She also witnessed a performance at Mills by Charlemagne Palestine and wrote a piece for him. "It's a graphic score," she explains. "The first movement looks like a rabbit in a maze. The second looks like a lettuce patch. The third is a reinterpretation of the rabbit. It had something to do with the Zen idea that first you see the mountain, then you don't and eventually you do again, but it's completely different after enlightenment. It was premiered in San Francisco about 1974. I admired his work so much. It was really beautiful."

Her primary composition teacher at Mills was Robert Ashley, who recognised the compositional worth of her electroacoustic work *Peachy Keen-O* (1973) and gave the green light to its staging by *Hysteria*, a group of women composers and performers. "We were allowed a Saturday afternoon concert on the regular series," Anderson remembers. "Despite the fact that Mills is a

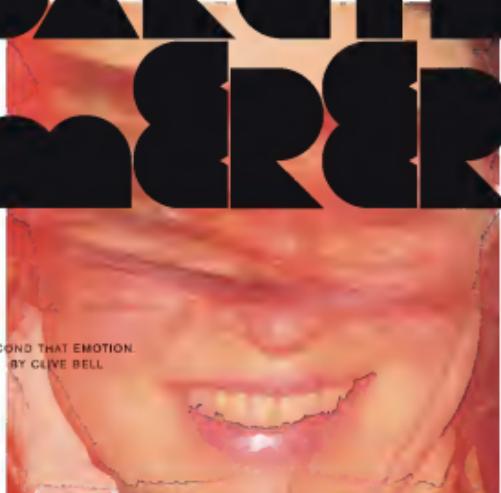
women's college at undergraduate level, most of the teachers and staff — and a high percentage of the graduate students — in the music department and electronic music studio were men. It was vital that the door was open."

Anderson has been for many years actively feminist. Her concert series Women's Work was initiated in New York in February 2004. "I still want to be a good role model to women musicians," she declares, "but I don't feel I need to do overt things such as only setting words of women poets or only working on music theatre projects based on a woman's life story. I feel that writing my music and proceeding onward is the best model. And I believe in working through organisations such as New York Women Composers, where I'm the treasurer, and the International Association Of Women In Music.

"I am comfortable with being called a 'woman composer,'" she continues. "It would not be necessary if women composers and men composers were performed, commissioned, rewarded, reviewed, recorded, published, taught and lauded equally. But we're not." The truth of her observation is evident from the neglect Anderson's own music has suffered until now. Terms are being negotiated for issue of a further CD of her songs, piano and chamber compositions, but much remains lamentably undocumented.

Anderson resists formulating any theoretical position as a woman composer but her vocabulary is uninhibited with regard to words such as 'beauty', 'love' and 'intuition'. In music she considers beauty "the highest goal", and it can be reached most readily through simplicity. "Composition is very good for theorists because it gives them employment," she suggests. "But it really isn't necessary for composers and is not interesting to an audience unless the composition is overcome by the beauty of the result." □ *Swales and Angels* is out now on *New World*

MARGARETH KAMMERER



SECOND THAT EMOTION.
BY CLIVE BELL

"I recorded a few times, but I was never really happy with it," remarks Italian singer Margareth Kammerer, from her home in Berlin. She's describing the origins of her first solo album, on which Billie Holiday-style renditions of poems by ee cummings and Paul Celan line up alongside half a dozen brooding odd remixes by Philip Jeck, Fred Frith, Bernard Fleischmann, Nicolaus Bussmann and Chorhème, label boss Christof Kuzmann. "Then I made some recordings in Italy with the help of guitarist Paolo Angel," she continues, "and I send to my friend Christof Kuzmann. This could be nice." He said, "I'll listen to it. I may be more objective than you." So he listened to these five songs, and he said immediately, "OK, maybe you'd like to put this out on my label." I said, "That's great!" but I was surprised, because Chorhème is an electronic and improvisation label, and I didn't think he was interested in releasing songs. Then he said, "Maybe I'd like to ask some people to make remixes, And I liked this idea very much."

The result is *To Be An Animal Of Real Flesh*, a fresh look at what an album of songs can be – instead of a group, Kammerer has a team of remixers. But she's no stranger in this land of cutting edge electronics, having moved freely among Berlin's avant garde community since relocating there in 1994. Before that she was active in improvisation groups in Bologna, and the link with Fred Frith goes back to the Bologna ensemble Eva Kant, who played material specially written by Frith and Butch Morris alongside their own work.

Once in the German capital, Kammerer formed a group called Guestar with Joe Williamson, Leonid Soyleiman and Nicholas Bussmann, but soon had to face the reality that her colleagues were simply too

busy to keep the project going. She began to concentrate on solo songwriting and performance, starting with a show in the flat of Andrea Neumann, who specialises in playing the customised insides of a piano. A concert series in someone's flat might induce claustrophobic thoughts in England or Japan, but of course a Berlin apartment can be wonderfully spacious. In fact Kammerer recorded several of her album tracks in friends' flats, including a unique live duet with trumpeter Axel Dörner, "I Carry Your Heart With Me". "I feel more relaxed than in a studio, where I get so nervous," she explains. "Time is running out, now you have to produce! These musicians have computers and good microphones, so you make some tea and then you record. And in Berlin these are fine rooms with good acoustics."

Another frequently noted advantage of the Berlin scene is its openness to other arts, the easy permeability between improvisation, composition, performance, theatre and dance. Kammerer stresses the importance of literature in her work, and two years ago she made a solo version of Hamlet for a theatre in Oslo. "I took some texts from Hamlet and sang them," she explains. "Then I showed slides of animals in the wild, in the woods – beautiful photos from the 50s. Other slides were incredible photos of special food prepared by a five star master chef."

As for singing, Kammerer studied in Rome with Japanese singer Michiko Hirayama, known for performing work by Giosuè Saccà and John Cage. "She is 80 and still active," says Kammerer. "In September she sang here in Berlin, Carlo Di Capriomo by Saccà." However, Kammerer finds the position of singers in the world of improvisation

problematic. "It's strange," she sighs. "I've been in this improvisation scene for years, I go to all the concerts and I love this music very much. But there are very few improvising singers that I like. Of course I listen to Robert Wyatt. But my biggest idol was always Billie Holiday. Then there's Phil Minton – but he is great because he is a musician, a trumpet player. That's the difference. When I sing, it's all about emotional stuff. I haven't found a way to improvise. Maybe I will find it, but for me there is a difference between a singer and a musician. And I'm a singer, not a musician in this sense."

One unusual quality lurking in Kammerer's record is a sense of musical community, a kind of coevolution that could give rise to such a collaboration; notwithstanding the current image of the isolated musician tethered by headphones to a laptop. And yet Kammerer has occasionally encountered resistance to placing songs in this context. As one youthful zealot remarked to her, "The song is regressive." She admits this is a complex area, but pleads for it not to be seen in black and white terms.

"I need to find a form for the voice, and that's why I began writing songs," she declares. "It's superficial to say that a song has no freedom. There are emotions in both improvisation and songs, they are different ways of handling emotions. You can say a song is more emotional, while an improvisation is a little more scientific, abstract, more precise. But the voice also has to be really precise to make the song work. Between science and emotion maybe there is another way of handling things – some other mixture of chemosmia." □ *To Be An Animal Of Real Flesh* is out now on Chorhème.

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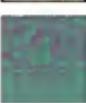


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gloBal Ear: Skopje + Bitola



Macedonian ethno-jazz group Politei, the Mosque ensemble, featuring Keiichi Sugimoto, Yoshio Machida, Atsuhiko Ito and Oliver Józefowski

Macedonia produces a delicious wine called *Tigzi Za Jug*, which translates as "yearning for the south". Its name is taken from a famous poem by Macedonian poet Konstantin Miladinov, who was writing about missing the abundant sunshine of his homeland during a stay in Russia. A great deal of Macedonian culture is influenced by the sun – as is Japan, whose original name Nippon means "Origin of the sun".

This summer, Biola's centre for contemporary public arts called Elemento and the Japanese organisation Colavo Collaboration launched an exhibition of contemporary art entitled Collaboration, the first stage of an ongoing Japan-Macedonia exchange programme. The event took place in Skopje and Bitola, with the second stage set to follow this autumn in Japan. The main purpose of the event was to encourage visual artists and experimental/improvising musicians to reconsider the whole notion of collaboration. Forging creative partnerships might come naturally to music makers – even those meeting for the first time – but fine art tends to remain a more solitary practice. So the works in Collaboration allowed viewers to compare approaches in each discipline and judge whether the joint efforts had actually helped to push back the limits of expression.

The music events were held at Bitola's Mosque City Gallery (located, as the name suggests, in a former mosque) and at Tocka, a modern and well organised alternative gallery space in the capital Skopje. Here, as in most other cities, the conventional musical menu consists of a diet of HipHop, R&B and rock. But occasionally, and in the old city of Bitola especially, you could pick out the strains of more traditional dance music, for example in a taxi, a market, or on TV. The music has unusual, complex rhythmic structures – 4/7 or 4/11 are not uncommon – which, to ears attuned to contemporary electronics, sometimes seem to place them closer to cut-up beats and glitch rather than contemporary pop pulses. Essentially, in every sequence the accent falls on the end of the beats, causing a pattern that sounds like regular stumbling. When you dance to this rhythm, it's more crucial to be able to hit that final accent with everyone else rather

than to holding down the groove on every beat. I felt this musical approach summed up the way the Macedonians organised the event as a whole. Decision making tended to occur in the moment, rather than in the preparation.

The music participants included Macedonians Oliver Józefowski and Fofin, with Japanese artists Keiichi Sugimoto, Tetsuro Yesunaga, Atsuhiko Ito and myself, Józefowski is a multimedia improviser and a composer of theatre music who originally studied music in Sofia, Bulgaria. He plays the double bass with contact microphones; bowing strings and beating the body of the instrument, he controls samples with trigger effects. He also plays his original sound system using glass. But unfortunately he was denied permission to play it on this occasion by the Ministry of Culture, which, bizarrely, is required. Fofin are an ethno-jazz group. Their predominant soundscape is actually Macedonian, but with some jazz inflections, and with a little tango essence of Astor Piazzolla. The vocalist Branislav Nikolov sometimes sings in a non-specific language. You can hear their peculiar brand of Fourth (or is it Fifth?) World music on their album *Donkey Hot*, released on local label Kukuzo Music.

Sugimoto and Yesunaga are both members of the electroacoustic group Minamo, but here they played solo and in newly formed partnerships. Sugimoto utilised guitar and laptop. He also goes out solo as Fourcolor, under which name he has just released a solo album on Apesparty. Extremely delicate guitar loops on long delays drift in a flow of electronics. Yesunaga played laptop and electronics. In Minamo, you could say, he produces water for the other players to swim in, but in this soft display he produced a vivid sound texture that was almost tactile enough to touch. Ito, promoter of Tokyo's Off Site venue, played his own instrument, the Otono, using fluorescent lights and electronics. Unfortunately his own 100W lights were confiscated at the airport before the performance, so he bought a 220V bulb in Skopje to make a completely new version. He used the instrument, which looks like a sword, to produce light flickers and killer noise in a mosque. I played my new Stoelenpan, which I call the

Amorphone #3 (the name incorporates the words amorphous and phone), morphed with Max/MSP processing. The construction of sound is like Indian star music, which has strings for resonance. I play simple patterns or melodies with Stoelenpan and MSP software, which produces a light drone part from the processing Stoelenpan sound. My two previous

Amorphones sounded more like gongs with special scales, but #3's characteristics is a very long sustain, with a clear and bright sound, although the size is smaller than a regular one.

We each played a solo, then Józefowski, Sugimoto, Yesunaga, Ito and I played as an ensemble. The Japanese artists were not familiar with Józefowski's sound in advance, and vice versa. During the soundcheck, we discussed how the ensemble could work. Józefowski adamantly wanted to play without any rehearsals together, a strategy that proved successful. Fofin play compositions, so they did not collaborate with the other musicians, although they did work together on an installation with two Japanese visual artists, cub and isamu; Joseph Yamazoe, who decorated the surface of Islamic columns with some sweets and candles, so it looked like a birthday cake. Nikolov and Ito set the candles alight and then the music was started. The Macedonians' sound was strong and frosty, while the Japanese one was generally more delicate (although they like to play loud). So you could say the texture was like oil and water, but once we played together in the liquid called improvisation, another liquid was created which gave all of us, with our various cultural backgrounds, different perspectives.

The best wines are produced by being grown in a climate where there is a big difference in temperatures between night and day. And of course, strong sunshine is also necessary. Sometimes this extreme climate cannot easily support human life. But on the other hand, it could be said that such hard environment provides the possibility of producing very special and charming things. □ Websites' ([Colavo collaboration](http://www.colavo-collaboration.com)) ([Elemento](http://www.amorfon.com.my)) ([Elemento](http://www.cac.org.my/elemento/about.htm))

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TESTED BY DAVID STUBBS. PHOTOS BY ANNA SCHORI

Steve Chandra (aka Chandrasonic) is guitarist with Asian Dub Foundation, who arose from Community Music, a London based organisation active until the mid-90s. He joined the group in 1994 – the following year, they released their debut album, *Facts & Fiction*.

Deliberately out of kilter with what they regarded as the retrograde Britpop movement in the UK, ADF found their initial success in France. However, with subsequent albums such as 1998's *Raft's Revenge*, they began to attract attention in the UK, particularly with their campaigning on behalf of Satpal Ram, a young Asian man widely believed to have been jailed unjustly for killing his assailant in self defence during a racist attack.

Asian Dub Foundation have done much to dispel the air of earnestness and austerity that had traditionally surrounded agitpop. Their music is a galvanising and highly charged mix of serrated punk, furious lyrical chat, dub bass, futuristically bent electronics and sampled traditional elements, culled, they say, from their parents' record collection. Their live shows are especially incendiary – they have been described as 'the best live act in Britain'.

Unselfconsciously, they have always retained contacts with their community music beginnings, going so far as to launch ADF Education (ADFED), a workshop project dedicated to teaching young people music skills, as well as participating in anti-globalisation events and compilations such as *Another World Is Possible*, put together by attac.org. They are essentially internationalists, whose tours of Brazil, Cuba and Eastern Europe have been in the nature of cultural exchanges than mere stop-offs.

More recently, they have performed live soundtracks to the French movie *La Haine*, which depicts the desperation of life in a Parisian ghetto, and Gilles Pontecorvo's 1985 masterpiece *The Battle Of Algiers*, a compulsive account of the struggle for Algerian independence.

ADF are about to commence work on their fifth studio album. More remarkably, they have also been commissioned by the English National Opera to write an opera about the life of the Libyan leader Colonel Qaddafi. The Jukebox took place in London.

JIMI HENDRIX

"SWEET ANGEL"

FROM THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE (1967) 2000

Well, it's obviously Jimi, but I was a bit put off by the drum machine. That's amazing! I thought it was one of the many Jimi Hendrix impersonators. It's "Angel", isn't it?

It would eventually become "Angel". But this is a composite of recordings made in November and December 1967, a very early demo version entitled "Sweet Angel".

But with a drum machine? This is a radically different version. It makes it sound contemporary. It's a Rhythm Ace, a very primitive drum machine, a pre-echo of how Hendrix might have sounded had he engaged with electronic rhythms.

That's an inspired choice. Awesome. There are a few really primitive drum machine-based tracks that I really like from the late 60s, early 70s like Sly & The Family Stone's "Family Affair", the early Can albums, I think he would have worked with these sorts of electronics. How old would he have been when samplers came out? His mid-forbes. You hope he would have continued to engage with things the way Miles Davis did.

Was Hendrix a touchstone for you?

Yeah, very much so. Thing is, I don't consider him to be this huge guitar icon at all. I see him as someone who had got an instrument and wants to paint the pictures in his mind with it. And that's a perspective you could apply to any instrument, any non-musical format, even. The guitar is so expressive for him that whenever he says something, the guitar illustrates it – or vice-versa, he says what his guitar is saying. There's no formal distinction between rhyme and lead, between lyric and sound. It's a very holistic way of making music – and that's unfortunately what most of his imitators failed to grasp. I don't think he was the first to do that – Bo Diddley was probably the first – but he was the most audacious and brilliant. The Who mashed up feedback but Hendrix turned it into an art.

FAUST

"AUFBRUCH NACH RUMÄNIEN"

FROM FAUST (MUSIK AUF DER ISLANDSKAIS 1967)

It sounds like someone who's built on Stockhausen but isn't Stockhausen. Is it Can?

Getting warm.

Faust?

Right. It's their soundtrack to the 1922 FW Murnau film *Nosferatu*, which they performed live.

Oh, right, it's that! Yeah, this is the first time I've heard this. Have you seen this? How was it? I felt it had a great rolling energy, as if they were tracking the psychic trauma of the film. Isn't this similar to what ADF did with *La Haine* and *The Battle Of Algiers*?

Well, yes and no. Similar in that it's a group playing a live soundtrack to a movie, but the thing about these guys is that they've abandoned rhythm [laughs], whereas for us, the key point with *La Haine* and *The Battle Of Algiers* was finding the rhythm of the action. This isn't to knock Faust at all – they're great. I have that first album with the transparent cover – but I think when you're doing this sort of thing with silent film it's quite easy just to make a lot of abstract, event garde noises, whereas in a film with dialogue, to find a rhythm that motors it along, that uses actual beats to propel the energy of the film is harder.

How does it work when you undertake this sort of

soundtrack? Is it prepared? Spontaneous?

There's a variety of methods but the finding of the rhythm is spontaneous. And it's extremely exciting when you find a rhythm that fits the scene because, as the listener or viewer, make it work. It's interactive. And it's really obvious as hell when it doesn't work. In a way, you're imposing a bit of yourself on the film but the film doesn't mind, the film allows you in.

I must admit I was concerned at the prospect of your creating a new soundtrack for *The Battle of Algiers*. As with Bernard Herrmann's music for Hitchcock's *Psycho*, the original soundtrack by Ennio Morricone is so integral, indispensable to the film.

Well, we don't dispense with it, we remix it. There's only one scene when we turn it down, and we don't even turn it down then, we sort of flick it in and out in an Old School dub style. And there's parts we use which people did think were part of the Morricone soundtrack.

With *La Haine*, there isn't a soundtrack as such, just musical moments. But the difference is that in the original the director Mathieu Kassovitz uses "Buying And Looting" by Bob Marley, whose lyrics suit what's happening on the screen but whose music doesn't fit the tempo. So for this one, we took "Th9", a track from our album *Facts And Fictions*, which matched the pace of what was going on in the movie.

Do you find reactions a bit strange at this kind of event? The protocol for audience reaction at movies is different from that at gigs.

Yeah, it's almost the direct opposite of an ADF gig. It's a more constant, cerebral experience, whereas gigs are stop-start. But it's just as invigorating, it's still a collective feel, we're trying just as hard to involve everyone in what's going on. We become another channel for that to happen. And they're both such powerful films that the endings are a huge, huge release, one that actually surpasses the gig experience. Probably *Algiers* was a shade better for us than *La Haine* because it was our second go at this sort of project and also because it timed with events in Iraq, which gave it a particular resonance.

MASAYUKI TAKAYANAGI

'IMPROVISATION NO 3'

FROM THREE IMPROVISATIONS ON A THEME OF QADHAFI LENYU 1980

[Shouting above the scalding, deafening shower of raging, tabletop guitar] It could be a whole number of people. I like it though, I must say. It's not Thirsting Gristle or Cabinet Voltarie, is it? **He was Japanese.**

[Discouraged] Ah, it's not music from *Godzilla* is it? [Laughs] I've got that.

It's Masayuki Takayanagi – one of his improvisations On A Theme Of Qadhafi.

Right I read about this and tried to download it! [Looks at sleeplessness, all in Japanese], Etc... He started off as jazz musician but then took a violent left turn and became a pioneer of tabletop guitar à la Keith Rowe. Towards the end of his life, he did a piece drawing on tapes of Hitler. Perhaps he saw Qadhafi simply as a dictator. But in the Asian Dub Foundation ENO project, you'll be depicting him as a very complex, myriad character. Yeah, let's hope so. The thing about Qadhafi is the vision, and how the vision unfolds in practice, which isn't pretty. And this was a vision untrammelled or unfettered by diplomacy or Machiavellianism, which is what makes him a maverick, almost like a musician or

artist. The whole idea of the *Green Book* in which he set out his revolutionary ideas, this distinct philosophy, this vision that attempts to solve the world's basic problems – a theory of everything.

It's almost certain that he was used as a scapegoat by the West, over the Lockerbie disaster in particular – despite his subsequently admitting responsibility.

He was a scapegoat but he was a willing scapegoat. He liked to take responsibility for things he didn't actually do – terrorism, supporting various revolutionary groups. But the most he ever did internationally was write the cheques. What he was involved in was the elimination of his Libyan opponents. But then, there are the more progressive aspects of his regime, especially in the 70s and 80s, the redistribution of wealth, the schools and hospitals that were built, women's rights. It's an amazing jumble of very progressive things, very repressive things, pure vision and the impossibility of putting the vision into practice. Plus the look of Qadhafi is key – he's very visual, very theatrical.

It's going to be as much about the myth of Qadhafi as the man himself, how that was made, shaped, the processes by which that occurred – plus the role he himself had in trying to create his own myth.

Was John Adams's *Nixon in China* an influence?

Yes, I enjoyed it. I'm not normally a fan of contemporary opera but in this context it did seem to work. It also conveyed the visual spread of the Cultural Revolution, the depiction of Kao-sing and Nixon was superb. To me, it was an artistic exploration of international politics, which is certainly a tangent of what ADF are about.

SUBA

'SERÉIA'

FROM SAMIM NOVAIS SÃO PAULO: A TROPICAL FLASH OF THE FUTURE (STEREOPHONIC 844563) 2006

Is it Japanese? French? Quite good, though, whatever it is.

It's from Brazil – although its creator was born in Yugoslavia.

It's not DJ Suba, is it?

Spot on

I have his album. He died – the story goes, his apartment caught fire and he went back in to get his records and... He was set to make it big. When ADF went to Brazil, we encountered his work. There's this incredibly lively strain of drum 'n' bass in Brazil – you have it with DJ Marky Mark also, who has become very fashionable in the UK, but deservedly so.

There have been a lot of Brazilian compilations recently but the whole notion of 'favela chic' is a bit stomach-turning, considering what life is actually like in those places, as depicted in films like *Bus 174*.

But on the more positive side, good music has come out of it and been established. If there is an interest, it's because of the people there, who generate so much colour and energy and vibe, it's irrepressible. ADF did go out to visit one of the favelas, the ghettos in Rio, a particularly rough one. City Of God came out of where we were, and there was a whole 'Gangs out of the ghetto' campaign going on while we were there. But for us, although we played with loads of the musicians there, and we introduced them to some technical gear they hadn't seen before, really we felt they had nothing to learn from us – we were learning from them. People manage to keep this amazing spirit despite the shadow of violence and poverty, drugs, turf wars, guns going off every few minutes. Favelas were

certainly no-go areas when we were there but hopefully, with the new leadership in Brazil, that's beginning to change. The new President da Silva grew up in a slum himself.

BOB DYLAN

'HURRICANE'

FROM OPEN UPON (SBDU 100) 1981

On yes, it's Dylan. "Hurricane". Funny you should play this, we were asked to do a version of this song, a few weeks before the premiere of the film *Hurricane* [based on the life of Reuben 'Hurricane' Carter, the boxer unjustly jailed for murder, subject of Dylan's song]. I think people were making parallels with Sarpal Ram, whom of course we campaigned for. Strangely, "Free Sarpal Ram" starts with a violin, as does this. The great instrument of lament for wrongly convicted prisoners...

I wish we'd done a version of this now. I think this is a very good song but I must admit I find most of his music to be a travesty. Just because you were an icon then doesn't give you a right to be an icon now. For the last 30 years I think he's been truly awful. Did you see that film in which he plays a rock star [Hearts Of Fire]? So awful. But I do love *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*.

So you're not especially a fan of his protest period?

See, I like the idea that he was considered a traitor. When ADF started, we were considered to have betrayed our Asian-ness by some people. They'd say, 'I expected you to be playing sitar', or 'I expected you to be wearing your costumes' or stuff like that. So I love the fact that Dylan was attacked, say, for going electric, or Miles Davis attacked for going 'commercial' in his electric period. I mean, *On The Corner* commercial, are you mad?

AMM

'WHAT IS THERE IN USELESSNESS TO CAUSE YOU DISTRESS?'

FROM ANAMM 1986 (BTR 1006) 1986

Yeah [joined], this sounds very much like the LMC Eastern European jazz scene – is this John Stevens? He is someone we do have a link with, in his teachings and the way he tried to universalise music, tried to encourage anybody and everybody to be involved in music regardless of their skills and background.

It's AMM, from 1986.

No, I know very little about them, or this scene. This was done in the 60s – fair enough, this is 1986 and this is them doing it and I'm sure it sounded fantastic back then but for people still to be doing this now and for it still to have an avant garde veneer, really annoys me intensely. It's not avant garde. Anyone doing this now is avant garde as *Oasis*.

Perhaps avant garde is not a phrase that even free Improv's practitioners and listeners would apply to the music if they were truthful – in some respects, it's akin to folk music, a discipline, with its preserved values, crafts, customs.

It's a tradition of its own but it's not at the forefront, it's retro. I never liked this early 70s radical left wing idea that the more unlistenable the music you made, the more radical and leftist it was...

But then Cornelius Cardew of AMM revolted against that very idea and decided to make very tonal, song-based music which he imagined would be more conducive to the ordinary proletariat and the results were...

Even worse, right? Yeah! I think it's a two way thing.

You've got to have some sort of experiment – excitement, rawness and directness.

EMIR KUSTURICA & THE NO SMOKING ORCHESTRA "LOST IN THE SUPERMARKET"

FROM VARIOUS: ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE (ATTAC/CRC) 2004

Is this Indian brass band music?

No. Recognise the tune yet?

[Guffaws] "Lost In The Supermarket", The Clash! Oh yeah, we're on this compilation [books over cover]! This was done by attac.org. We were at the event to launch this in Paris.

Do compilations like this emphasise that the notion of "protest music", once almost mandatorily grey and grizzling, has now become much more exciting and variegated without compromising its core messages and values?

Yeah, definitely. And it's become very visual, even party-orientated, which is really good. It has changed, it's more widespread. Unfortunately, corporate control is so great that it gets very little coverage, all the channels are blocked up. More people marched against the war in Iraq than they did against Vietnam and yet this gets less profile, less coverage. But balanced against that information monopoly you've got the Internet. It's like there's two worlds and a high wall divides them.

Everything's underground, everything's DIY nowadays – because everything else is so determined by marketing. But this whole album is a wonderful example of superb packaging, great music, brilliant theme, brilliant campaign. And a great organisation. They're French based, multi-denominational. They're able to reach this massive constituency of protest.

GANG OF FOUR

"HISTORY'S BUNK"

FROM SOLD GOLD (M&M) 2004

I do recognise this...

It's quite extreme, even for them.

Gang Of Four?

Right. It was originally the B side to 1981's "What We All Want" but is included in this year's reissue of Sold Gold.

I was especially a fan of the first album, myself. It's a brilliant guitar sound here, though.

Again, there was that problem in the 80s with politico music that sonically, arises automatically tightened when you embarked on agit-pop. Whereas the guitar on this, especially for the time, is utterly incontinent.

Sure, and this doesn't really have much precedent. There's punk, funk and Captain Beefheart in the mix here but they really were out on their own. I always thought they were much better than The Clash, I mean, for a start, what a name, Gang Of Four! And the lyrics were so subtle, the deconstruction, the politics of consumption, The Clash I'm afraid for me were a bit posturing, a bit James Dean, which I found offputting – revolutionary chic. One of the things that ADF is about is day to day work, grass roots stuff, rather than just banner-waving.

It's a slow, laborous, unglamorous process. Whereas revolutionary chic is about ever-ramrodding that process, trying to cut out the work involved and getting straight to the paraphernalia of the victory celebration. That's what Che Guevara could never handle – he had to get out of Cuba because he couldn't stand the boredom of financial spreadsheets

and agricultural issues. So he went to try to start a revolution in Bolivia.

USTAD AMJAD ALI KHAN

"RAGA BILASHKHANI Todi"

FROM SANGEET (NARADA) 1995

[Listens intently] It's not Ravi Shankar... Ustad...?

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan.

Right! Indian classical music was the soundtrack to my every Sunday morning. This isn't the star, though, is it? It's the sard.

Correct. This concert was recorded on a Sunday morning, in January 1994 at the Kula Gallery in London. He was in good form.

What I find listening to music like this is that it changes time, it deforms/reformats time. Whatever I'm doing, it's like a Pavlov's Dog thing, you're automatically arrested by it. And then, as you journey into it, maybe about ten minutes, once the raga is exposed, you're drawn in towards a core. People talk about this music as relaxing and meditative, but actually it can take you to some very dark places, very serious places. It is meditative but the content of the meditation is what's vital.

Again, it's music that is on one level always "the same", formally and in the way it proceeds but which yields a rich abundance of results and experiences. How would you draw on Indian classical music for ADF? Would you consider it too "pure"?

Oh do we have our fair share of drones! There's a track on the next album that's the nearest to classical as we've approached. We find our way back to it but not in obvious ways.

SUN RA

"SPECTRUM"

FROM THE SOLAR MYTH APPROACH VOLUME 2 & 3 (CHIARLY) 2001

[Instantly] Sun Ra! "Spectrum". From The Solar Myth Approach, isn't it?

Bulldogs again. It was originally recorded in 1971.

This track is scary. I'm so glad you played me this – I lost this album, I haven't heard this in 15 years.

How were you introduced to Sun Ra?

Someone bought me an album of his for my birthday. I don't know why. Sun Ra is quite abstract but there is also the great vocal and jazz things he's got going. But when he does something like this, it's so evocative of everything he's talking about – Egyptology, deep space. I think Sun Ra's cosmology is amazing.

Sun Ra's music is the model of the reality he's exposing, isn't it? A necessary creation of mental space?

There's an interconnectedness. When I hear Sun Ra, I hear galaxies colliding but also the smallest molecular structure. And even the way he dressed – it was a serious philosophy. Serious, serious.

Appertaining to the black experience, is the idea of the Afro-futurist thing that any place is better than here and now?

The beautiful thing with Sun Ra is what happens in the film Space Is The Place, the idea that it begins in the ghetto – this amazing scene with Ra arriving from his spaceship in this ghetto in Philadelphia, talking to these youths with Afros and flares... It goes back to the favela thing, using these places as launchpads for a vision into a new world, with very few resources. That's a wonderful philosophy – that you can go into the poorest part of the world and come out with a fantastic, visionary, intergalactic artistic statement that's both energetic and has a social purpose. □



Gerard Add Gerard Add



FOR VOCALIST PHIL MINTON, SINGING IS AN IMMENSELY PHYSICAL ACT ROOTED IN THE WILD BODY ART OF ANTONIN ARTAUD AFTER ITS LIBERATION BY JOHN COLTRANE. BEGINNING IN MIKE WESTBROOK'S BIG BAND AND WELFARE STATE, WHERE HE FORMED HIS PARTNERSHIP WITH PERCUSSIONIST ROGER TURNER, MINTON'S PARALLEL COMMITMENTS TO FREE IMPROV AND SONG HAVE BEEN PLAYED OUT ON STAGES, THE STREETS AND PICKET LINES. WORDS: BEN WATSON. PHOTOS: THOMAS BUTLER



Phil Minton is a singer who's been living in music since 1962 when he left his hometown of Torquay, a seaside resort far out on England's south west coast. Aged 22, he moved to London to become a professional musician and join the Mike Westbrook Band. Although praised by arrangers and composers as an interpretive singer, and as a distinctive trumpeter, Minton is drawn towards something entirely different by the without-a-net challenge of free improvisation. He becomes a sound poet, a larynx-and-tongue retro-engineer, a one-man vocal apocalypsee, a sound poet. He riffs on the outer edges of vocal expression: grangles, retches, glockal imitations, wheezes, throat song, asphyxiation, compulsive laryngismus. Ultimately, Minton's singular performances put his audiences through seances of panic, trauma and wonder which resolve to highly wrought music. No actor – except perhaps those directed by Peter Brook in the 1970s – has presented such extreme, abject states so unprotected by the usual filters of acknowledged style, and with such a commodious repertoire of vocal noise.

Appropriately enough, Minton is currently performing in a music theatre piece about Antonin Artaud, with words by Belgian playwright Jan Fabre and music by Eric Slechta. Called *Man In Tolulation*, it has already received performances in Belgium and the Netherlands. Minton believes Artaud's artless wild body – anticipated the assault on repressive European culture that arrived in the 1960s. Recently, Artaud has become the 'figurehead of choice for artistic radicals who believe that nationality itself, rather than capitalism, is the main enemy. Talking of Artaud, André Breton remarked that public spectacles of psychotic and self-destructive behaviour, far from subverting bourgeois values, actually allow the establishment to patronise artists. His criticism still resonates (was Sid Vicious 'more radical' than Johnny Rotten?).

Artaud's tragic biography — early acting and literary acclaim unravelling into heroin addiction and incarceration in mental asylums — made him a pin-up for the anti-psychiatry movement of the 60s. However, his attempt to subvert French literary culture actually left a job undone. Those lucky enough to locate a recording of his famous *To Have Done With The Judgment Of God* radio broadcast can be disappointed. Breaking from a tradition as powerful as that of French poetry and theatre wasn't easy. Artaud blamed it on the rhythms of radio transmission, but — as he wrote to Colette Thomas in June 1946 — he could detect the voice and tone of mainstream opera singer Albert Lambert in his performances. He'd initially tried to break every aesthetic and moral rule, but was nevertheless bound by the rhetoric of his age and ended up sounding like a Parisian opera star. The 19th century trappings of scenario, costume and plot had been burnt off, but the voice itself required further work.

Technologies of transmission are important here. Records provide a different context to that of the written page. Nuances of accent and emphasis allow the instant judgments about sincerity which people make face to face. One is no longer simply judging deployment of literary codes – the communication system of the elite – but of behaviours that merge imperceptibly with those of home, street, and bar. Familiar with a wide range of voices, today's listeners – for whom the voices of Muddy Waters or Esther Phillips or Emmett might be benchmarks – can't quite credit Artaud as a vocalist. Phil Minton's great achievement, in other words, is that he sounds nothing like Lambert. Faced with his improvisations, the listener confronts sounds more readily associated with

the intimacies of sexual coupling, the accibed and the insane asylum – or even the terminal ward. Unlike Artaud, Minton was born into an era when mechanical reproduction and the black American revolution – fused together in a package named jazz – laid the basis for a genuinely unapresmed, non-literary voiceplay. He reckons he listened to John Coltrane every day between 1957 and 1967. His improvisations show that he grasps the inner structure of Coltrane's new universal language. Musically, Minton starts with *Live in Seattle* (1965), where Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders startle, howling into their microphones.

It's instructive to try writing this down. One becomes aware of the parameters that letters and punctuation omit; high and low notes, alterations in volume and speed, dramatic phrasing, interconsonantal traffic, label interference, laryngal hyperbole. If you tried to note every nuance, you'd end up writing the "impossible" scores associated with Brian Ferneyhough and the New Complexity school of composition. Except even then – especially then – you'd lose the sense of release, of joy, of unbridled invention on the part of the singer.

Although free improvisation spurs Minton to go far beyond received notions of jazz, Minton's abiding influences remain Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy. Not so much echoing their note sequences as emulating their *essence*, cutting sense of pliant honesty. Arguably, it's with persuasionalist Roger Turner on board that Minton achieves his most radical performances. Turner's astonishing eloquence – the fastest persuasionalist I've ever seen – means he can play rasps and smacks that are like mouth noises. When they're at full pelt, you can't tell the pair apart. It's a new music – alien and pristine, shockingly acute in every cell.

"Turner is quick as a percussionist," declares Minton, "but his ideas are still quicker" – varying the thing that's hit, the way it's hit, the duration of the hit. After the first couple of times we did it, we realised that two people could make an entire music. We knew we had something, something real."

Ceda Da, released on Leo Records in 1983, is the duo's masterpiece. Like Tony Oxley on drums or Derek Bailey on guitar, Minton has developed an entire new vocabulary of sound for his purposes. In 1986, Leo released *Ruff* by a quartet named The Ferals, with Minton's voice and Turner's percussion joined by Alan Tommison on trombone and Hugh Davies on live electronics. The presence of Hugh Davies is fascinating, since he was a member of Derek Bailey's Music Improvisation Company, which recorded an album for ECM in 1970 (and which has recently been

issued on CD in Japan). When MIC did a radio broadcast on BBC Radio 3 in July 1989, they were labelled as the London Instrumental And Electronic Improvising Group. Like Bailey with his stereo amplifiers and volume pedals, Oxley and Davies were pioneers in using electronic equipment to allow new modes of musical interaction; the vocabulary of free improvisation is unthinkable without their input. In fact, if improvisers restrict themselves to proper instruments and traditional technique, the music loses its dialectic between unmediated sound and personal control; a point that Bailey agrees with:

It's the sound that actually matters, not the gear. It all ends up going in the human ear, so the mouth, tongue and throat can spit it back. Phil Minton is the proof. He internalises all the '60s experimentation and manages to make vocal sounds with a remarkable range, flexibility and suggestibility. When Four Ears released *Q* by *poire_x* and Minton this year (see the final track on *The Wire Tapper* 11, with issue 244), Minton was perfectly at home in Günter Müller's electroacoustic soundscape. His song-oriented releases provide a striking contrast. Compared to his records with Turner, *The Westbrook Blake* (1980) and *Which Side Are You On* (2003) – the latter by a quartet with Myron Watson on piano, the Ex's Lee Cox on bass and Michael Watcher on drums – sound formal and rather sentimental. In the extended vocalise of Minton's improvisations, all the traditional triggers for evoking emotion are abandoned, simply because they take too long for his restless imagination to endure. Although he's using the oldest instrument known to human beings (and which connects us to the cries and songs of the animal kingdom), Minton makes the music as hectic and urgent as lives harried by faxes, emails and mobile phones.

As usual, it was black America that showed the way to a musical culture that could deal with the exigencies of modern life: the revolutionary music of Louis Armstrong and John Coltrane. Mirren also had a highly musical family background. This meant that the example of jazz fell on exceptionally fertile ground. Welsh Methodism and community singing were the unlikely – but crucial – seedbed. I asked him about his family.

"My mother was just a housewife, really," Minton recalls, "but she was a semi-professional singer as well. She'd sing the songs of the day, almost semi-religious, like 'Bless This House', and some light operas. Fantastic voice, she was a soprano. My father was a bass singer, he sang in choirs. I had an uncle, Tom, who was a tenor. I used to try and sound like all of them. They'd rehearse at home, and do concerts in places like old people's homes, the Methodist Church Hall, firemen's conventions. Some of my first memories are going to hear them sing in American bases in the early 1940s—but also the sound of the siren, which was another intriguing sound for me, you're supposed to be frightened of a siren, but for a little three year old kid it was fantastic, you'd just get cuddled. I didn't really get it that there were all these Germans dropping bombs and trying to kill me. I thought the sound of the sirens was wonderful."

One of the days on which I interviewed Minton was the 60th anniversary of D-Day. TV and radio were full of it. The local press on the south coast issued special supplements full of reminiscences from veterans. Minton remembers D-Day too. "A strong memory from 1944 in Torquay was a sound like this," he says,





were a lot of Allied air bases in Devon. Of course I hadn't a clue that they were aeroplanes going out to kill Germans, to me it was a beautiful sound."

Minton came from a traditional English working-class home, with the respectable front parlour that was rarely used. "The family home was a terraced house in the working part of Torquay," he says. "The sitting room with a piano in it we only used on a Sunday. The kitchen was in the back, No refrigerator or telephone. My parents came to Torquay from Wales, most of the people in the street were Welsh. There was a little organisation so both my parents were members of the Welsh Society, they used to do concerts there. I was singing out of school to do little bits of singing, but I was never very clear about what kind of voice I had. Even then, I was experimenting."

The presence of American troops brought with it new-fangled delights such as the radio. The young Minton would imitate the voices he heard. "I was a boy soprano," he says, "but I'd mess around. One of my favourite singers was Jimmy 'Schnozzle' Durante – it's my nose's anniversary, here we go, I got the biggest schnozz in the biz..." Amazing guy! I was really intrigued. I used to do party impersonations, I'd do Sohndure Durante going into Katherine Ferrier. I used to do both my parents and my uncle. As a soprano I could do my mother's voice. I used to attempt to sing bass too. A lot of children try that."

Was Minton encouraged to play the piano in the parlour? "It was immediately, absolutely," he responds. "My older sisters were both pianists. When I was eight I had osteomyelitis, bone disease. I got it on Christmas Day 1948. Going back to school, I couldn't cope. I failed the 11-plus [examination], which the rest of the family had all passed. I started hanging around with the naughty boys. Now there were cops coming round the house if there was something up in the neighbourhood. I was accused of robbing the poor box, I think my parents gave up on me academically. It was put down to the fact that I'd been ill. I left school at 15."

Minton remembers 10" LPs of Schoenberg and Bartók records his uncle bought from a club, but they didn't make much impression. Voices were what fascinated the young Minton.

"I think the first time I really noticed a performance was the tune 'Unchained Melody', a hit of the summer of 1965," he ponders. "There was an English cover by Jimmy Young – this was before he became a radio DJ. I couldn't stand it, but there was another version by Al Hibbler. He was a blind singer who sang with Duke Ellington. I couldn't work out why Jimmy Young made me feel it, and this other guy I loved so much, it was obviously the performance, not the notes, because it was the same song. Then I started to notice Louis Armstrong. I got a 78rpm of 'Basin Street Blues'. My father didn't like jazz, but he was keen that I be interested in something, as opposed to going out and being a naughty boy. He bought me an LP called Introduction to Jazz by the Rev Kershaw, an American. I loved that record, I've still got it. It was selections, starting with New Orleans jazz, the most modern stuff was the New Orleans Revival of the 40s with Bunk Johnson and the clemmets George Lewis. Most of it was from the 20s and 30s, New Orleans ensemble music."

Voice of America, the powerful radio station transmitted from the US forces' Frankfurt HQ, broadcast tunes by Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. "I was completely obsessed with their music," Minton says. "I wanted to be a jazz musician, I didn't want to work in the printing works, which was absolutely horrible: noisy, smelly, dirty. I had no interest in it at all.

It wasn't a proper apprenticeship, they just used me as a grease monkey, cleaning the ink off the machines. 'The big record for me was The Miles Davis Quintet, Cookin' with Coltrane and Philly Joe Jones,' he continues. "Miles was so exciting to me, Presley sounded pedestrian, dreadful. It was supposed to be this 'rebellious' music, but no way, Philly Joe Jones and John Coltrane were the thing for me! This must've been 1956, I saw Rock Around The Clock, Little Richard was cool. He was something else. Fats Domino I liked as well, the black singers. I didn't like the white stuff."

Minton's rejection of pop carried on into his professional life. Between 1966 and 1971, he was in Sweden, singer in a dance band. Minton didn't mind singing pop in the dance band with a repertoire of 700-plus songs – it was a way of extending his vocal skills – but he couldn't take the material seriously. "It was a job, reasonably paid," says Minton. "We travelled all over Lapland: pop hits and soul songs. I'd be jumping from voice to voice, I got really interested in vocal colour. I was never really into singing them like you believe it, but it seemed commanding, especially in a foreign country. To this day I still don't understand pop – why people focus on some person, I was more interested in the process of singing, the form."

Minton's heart was in a free jazz quartet he ran with saxophonist Lars Goran Ullander, then their repertoire of post-Coltrane dirges and freeform blowouts couldn't supply a living wage, and the album they recorded remained unreleased until 1998.

Returning to London meant reconnecting with Miles Westbrook, who he'd been working with before he left for Europe. Of course, The Mike Westbrook Band had been Minton's original entry to the metropolis – a bunch of young jazz firebrands from Plymouth Art School. The group included saxophonist Lou Gane and guitarist Keith Rowe – who left to form AMM with Eddie Prevost – and the brilliant bonzonic saxophonist John Surman, who won the Downbeat award on his instrument. "I met up with John Surman at a jam session in Devon," says Minton. "He told me he and Mike and Keith had moved to London and they were looking for a trumpet player. I packed up my job and moved to London, Tavistock Crescent, just off Ladbrooke Grove. That was the old Notting Hill days. John Surman and Keith Rowe had the basement flat, and I had a room upstairs. I used to do all my cooking down with them. We were all basically in one L-shaped room, cutie a place. We did a few gigs around in London – the Marquee, the Mercury Theatre. Not very well paid."

"I did some BBC radio broadcasts with Westbrook in late 1971," he continues. "Also performances with the theatre troupe Welfare State. We called them 'happenings', perhaps a bit more organised than they had been in the 60s – theatrical events. We did a fantastic one at the Tower of London called Cosmic Circus. I remember Jeff Nuttal [the recently deceased poet, critic and author of *Bomb Culture*] walking around the battlements in his underpants ranting away, quite outrageous. There were complaints. We did another one in St John's Smith Square. I remember one reviewer asking, 'But is it jazz?' It was singing, 'I Believe', and one of the actors was fixing a helium balloon to me, and I was gradually being lifted off the floor. As I was singing, these two women came and put two mackerel in my mouth. Then an actor came on pretending to be blind with a walking stick – he smashed into the balloons, bursting them, and I came back to earth. But was it jazz?' laughs Minton.

What did the group think of Keith Rowe and Lou Gane leaving Westbrook to form AMM? "They just thought it wasn't for them," replies Minton. "Mike

was a composer, he was clear about that. The split actually happened when I was away in Sweden. AMM's ambient period had changed by 1971, they were doing the songs, [Cornelius] Cardew's 'teach the workers' period. The fire had gone out of the polemic about improvisation and how free it should be. Should you advertise a gig? If it's really free you might not want to play on the night. People used to talk like that."

It was while playing in Welfare State – a people's music collective led by John Fox, with musical direction by Miles Westbrook and then Lol Coxhill – that Minton met percussionist Roger Turner, and got back into improvisation. "At times," he remembers, "Welfare State became absolute improvisation – with Colin Wood and Lol and Roger. I remember one gig, nine o'clock in the morning in Aberystwyth in North Wales. I was completely on my own walking through the shopping centre. This was a suggestion by John Fox. I was in some weird costume, singing free improvisation as I walked through. No one was there to click, so I thought: 'I'm not going to do this, I'll just walk through behaving normally.' But I pushed myself, and it was amazing, it changed me, seeing that I could do it. It was shocking for people."

Minton holds to the principles of populism and freedom and fun – street avant garde – which he learned in the 60s. His militancy survived the long Thatcher/Reagan winter of the 1980s, the beginning of which he dates to Grunwick in 1977, a famous labour dispute where the British left was pulverised. "Grunwick was a photo opportunity plant, employed a lot of Asian women, cheap labour, who wanted union recognition," he explains. "The bosses and the Labour government wouldn't let them have it. It was great, the miners and the post office workers coming out on strike for these Asian women. Keith was very committed, I saw AMM at the Grunwick demonstrations. I was still with Westie then, in his brass band, and we played a benefit the day before the great picket was cancelled. I think something really significant happened then: the battle was lost. Some deal was done. That's when the miners' strike of 1984 was lost in my opinion, a historic moment. My wife asked me a while back, 'What happened at Grunwick?' I couldn't answer, I'd put it out of my mind, but it was a humiliating defeat."

The times got worse, but the music got better as the duo with Roger Turner progressed and Minton's array of vocal sounds increased. Minton appears to keep his absolute improvisation separate from his role as a singer of songs. Does he feel tempted to bring in tunes and songs when he's improvising, ironic citations of pre-modern kinks to buck Improv 'dogma'? "We almost did bring in a tune once – by mistake!" he laughs. "No, it just seems like there's so many other things to do. Time's too short to bother with some remembered song. To be quite frank, I find it very hard once I'm into that, improving world to launch into a song, I'm into an abstract state."

How come such vivid, intense dialogues – total focus on the instant – produces such convincing arcs of long-term musical structure? "I don't know!" puzzles Minton. "I try not to think of anything. In most pure improvising situations, the only thing that would be discussed is the length of the piece, when we're going to stop. I don't like stopping, actually, I find the whole business of stopping and people banging their hands together pretty weird. What's going on? I suppose everything you do is about memories, but we just get into territories where I'm just supplying the air and it's happening on its own."

listen back to things and think, 'How the hell did I do that?' People ask me for advice about how to get certain sounds and I tell them, 'I haven't got a fucking clue!'

Phil Minton's discourse is down to earth, stemming from experience rather than speculation or doctrine. Even so, he can teach, and does it by example. "Most musical education is directed at playing other people's music, composed music, whereas I got the idea somewhere along the line that it was wrong to copy – that it was wrong to copy Miles Davis, for example, which I could do quite well on trumpet. When the tune stops you've got to stop copying, get into this no man's land of improvising." Minton leads vocal workshops culminating in concerts, which London Improv's most assiduous documentarian Tim Fletcher describes as "fabulous". "We call it The Feral Choir," says Minton. "An organiser will advertise for people who want to be part of a three day workshop to explore their voices. I put together a piece for performance during that time. I've done it in Melbourne and Paris, and I'm flying to Poland for another one. 150 kids really concentrating on the pitches of their hiss, moving up and down... I love it."

At the end of the interview Minton is keen that I mention Toot, his trio with Alex Dornier and Thomas Lehn, and his body of work with pianist Vervyn Weston, which includes *Songs From A Prison Diary*, a setting for 26 voices of Ho Chi Minh's poems. Here Minton sings "straight". To these ears, this side of his work reveals the error of Cornelius卡内尔's Maoist overvaluation of traditional form as a political tool. Minton, however, remains thoroughly committed to it. He thinks of Ho Chi Minh as both freedom fighter and poet. A tour of Austria, France and Germany with an acoustic quartet comprising Weston, Turner and John Butcher on sax is planned for December. Although he developed his extended singing at a time when electronics were all the rage, he now prefers – if circumstances permit – to sing without a mic. He wants the immediacy and speed of an untreated, in-your-face performance.

"The problem with electronics," he explains, "is that you're using a dead energy in the first place – fossil fuel. What'll they do when it's used up? Keith Rowe will be all right, I remember him in his Green days, when he used to play acoustic jazz guitar with Webster.

Although it's the personal and bodily that interest Minton, he concedes that distinctions between real and electronic sound are spurious once you're listening to a CD. "I quite agree, I'd rather go to a live gig," he counters, continuing, "With [the label] ECM, you're starting to get this sound which is that of a studio rather than the musicians. Then on the other hand, a lot of record listeners really seem to like that. I think this has a lot to do with electronics at the moment, people prefer music in which they're not intimidated or challenged by the person."

To hear Minton improvising freely with a percussive genius like Roger Turner is to encounter a no man's land quite beyond the ken of either estate agents or Maoist state-capitalist regimes. Beauty is created, not by drowning out bodily anguish in the nostalgia triggered by echo and ambience, but by the collective and immediate realisation that nothing human is foreign to us. In an age of technofetishism, Minton's insistence on the expressive human body may appear old-fashioned, but as long as we're here to listen, the body is an encumbrance that won't go away. □



PHIL MINTON ON DISC

PHIL MINTON QUARTET WITH LARS GÖRAN UHLANDER

UP UMEÅ (BLUE TOWER) 1969

As John Corbett argues in his liner notes, this session, recorded in 1968 (but not released until 1999) at the national Swedish TV studio, is a fascinating document of European free jazz. Minton hasn't yet developed the timbral sonority and lightning speed of his later vocal work, but he hollers and trumpets with gusto. Minton's grandiose arrangements owe a debt to John Coltrane's Africa/Brass, but they have a special dignity too.

LOL COXHILL

WELFARE STATE (VIRGIN) 1975

Worth investigating for the undying charm of Coxhill's fairground arrangements and playing – wistful, dotty, plaintive, Minton is on half the tracks playing trumpet and singing. Coxhill's interest in superimposing different musics means that even Minton's straight singing becomes a welcome addition.

THE FERALS

RUFF (ILEO) 1988

A stunning (and appropriately named) quartet: Minton and Turner with Alan Tomlinson (trombone) and Hugh Davies (electrotronica), opening up complete new vistas of relentless, sizzling four-way interaction. The four performers combine to form a single entity, though the rusted wire skeleton of this wild and kinky animal is evidently provided by Roger Turner's percussion.

PHIL MINTON

A DOUGHNUT IN ONE HAND (FMP) 1988

Although easier to find than his impossibly rare solo debut *A Doughnut In Both Hands* (RR 1981), this is still more amazing, both in terms of voice and recording. Minton moves around his own vocal apparatus, showing us what infinites of music can lie in such infantile pastimes as belches, gurgles, babbling, screeches and screams. This recording at the Friends Meeting House in Welwyn Garden City will no doubt end up being used for horror film soundtracks, but the 'satanic' element is simply that the music is not ashamed of the performer's body.

PHIL MINTON & ROGER TURNER

DADA DA (ILEO) 1993

Dada tributes are normally paid affairs, but this soundtrack would have reduced the Cabaret Voltaire to sated silence. The sheer range of the music makes the paraphernalia of musical production – from orchestra to samplers – redundant. Minton and Turner extract music from unexpected sources in the way Kurt Schwitters found poetry in rusty pram wheels, fincan tops and sweet wrappers. A child's crayon adorns the cover.

PHIL MINTON QUARTET

MOUFLON OF ECSTASY (VICTO) 1996

Minton and Turner with John Butcher on saophones and Veyran Weston on piano. The text is James Joyce's

Finnegan's Wake. Minton alternates between straight song (Joyce loved Irish-born American tenor John McCormack's voice) and vocalese, with probably too much of the former for fans of Minton's extremes.

PHIL MINTON/JOHN BUTCHER/ERHARD HIRT

TWO CONCERTS (FMP) 1997, REC 1995

Two trio concerts from Vandœuvre and Antwerp, with John Butcher on saophones and Erhard Hirt on guitar and electronics. A weird landscape of scrapes and squeaks, so eloquently fisted that people who haven't seen the trio live assume it's an especially suggestive piece of electronics.

NO SPAGHETTI EDITION

PASTA VARIATIONS (SOFA) 2002

A troupe of Norwegian improvisers led by Oslo's Ivar Zach (percussion) and harp Grydeland (guitar) with Minton and Pat Thomas from Britain: wild, loopy, experimental – the ensemble deliberately unravel before your ears. Hardly an essential Sofa release, but fans of Ground Zero should investigate.

PHIL MINTON & ROGER TURNER

DRAINAGE (EMANEM) 2003

Astonishing double CD package comprising four studio and concert encounters from 1988, 2002 and 2003; a manifesto for the Minton/ Turner aesthetic, with a breadth of sonic reference which is staggering.

PHIL MINTON & GÜNTER CHRISTMANN

"FOR" FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

"(CONCEPTS OF DOING/EXPLICO) 2003

Recorded in Hanover (birthplace of Kurt Schwitters), Günter Christmann's unbelievably agile trombone and cello extract a similar level of improvised vocalises (multiphonics, timbral contrasts, sheer lunacy) achieved in Minton's encounters with Roger Turner. Towering modern art at odds with everyone else's plumb line.

4WALLS

WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON (RED NOTE) 2003

Graced with a startling drawing from the Phenomenon Collection, the CD's line-up – Minton with Luc En Barre and Michael Vatcher on drums, plus Veyran Weston on piano – promises high-powered electro-schizophrenia, but there's a lot of Minton's straight singing. Unfortunately, this writer is allergic to drawing room Stalinism. Words by Paul Haines and Ho Chi Minh.

POIRE Z + PHIL MINTON

O (FOR 4 EARS) 2004

Minton meets the electronic improvisers Günter Müller, erik, Norbert Möslang and Andy Guh live at the Musique Action Festival in Vandœuvre-les-Nancy in May 2002. Despite the agility of the other improvisers, or perhaps because of their reliance on loops and textures, Minton emerges as the active intelligence, although he sounds so at home in the electronic forest, you have to listen for him. □



FREE



WITH THEIR NEW ALBUM *A GHOST IS BORN*
CO-PRODUCED BY JIM O'ROURKE, FORMER ALT COUNTRY
OUTFIT *WILCO* COMPLETE THE TRANSITION BEGUN ON
THEIR BREAKTHROUGH *YANKEE HOTEL FOXTROT* INTO FULL
BLOWN ELECTRONIC ROCK EXPERIMENTALISTS.
LEADER JEFF TWEEDY TALKS EDWIN POUNCEY THROUGH THE
CHANGES, WHICH INCLUDE RECRUITING IMPROV
GUITARIST NELS CLINE AND DRUMMER GLENN KOTCHE
TO THEIR CURRENT TOURING GROUP
PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN HOOPER

SPRIT



"If I played you all the Wilco songs in chronological order on an acoustic guitar they probably wouldn't sound that different," declares Wilco leader Jeff Tweedy. "What has become more interesting to me, though, is that as these simple songs continue to come out of me I've also been able to tap into my unconscious. I'm always happiest with a song when I feel it came from some place that I couldn't reach intellectually without having art and music to help me get there. The exciting part of being involved with Wilco during the last few records has been to be able to transfer that unconscious state into the overall band, where we use the songs as skeletons to hang different ideas on. Then we pull the skeleton out and get rid of it."

As long strange trips go, they don't come much stranger than the journey undertaken by Chicago group Wilco, from their alt country roots in Tweedy's former outfit Uncle Tupelo to the transcendental Krautrock, machine drones and exquisite studio hatched electronic rock of their new album *A Ghost Is Born*. Wilco are that roncy, a moderately successful group who deservedly grew bigger as they got wunder and better. Their musical growth has not been without risk. Much to its embarrassment now, their former label Reprise made them walk when they refused to make any changes to their breakthrough experimental album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* (2002), mislabeled by Jim O'Rourke. The group got the album back, streamlined it on the Internet, where Wilco achieved hero status on discussion boards the Web over for sticking to their guns. The Wilco line-up has necessarily evolved to keep apace with the changes. Drummer and experimental musician Glenn Kotche replaced Ken Coomer during the making of *YHF*, and for their Ghost tour Wilco recruited improvisational guitarist Nels Cline, who has worked with Quartet Music, Gregg Bension's Interzone, the Geraldine Fibbers, Scornella and Cate Le Bon, as well as leading his own Nels Cline trio and the Nels Cline Singers – the latter's latest CD *The Giant Pin* has just been released on Cryptogramophone. For Cline, being in Wilco is a revelation. "What Jeff really has in mind when he asks somebody like me to come in is a subversion of the generic," he says.

"Our previous guitarist Leroy Bach left Wilco abruptly to do a music theater project in Chicago," remarks Tweedy, about Cline joining. "As a result I'd started playing more electric guitar than I had in the past and I felt it would be worth asking Nels if he wanted to join the band. I've known him for a little over eight years since meeting him on tour when he was playing with The Geraldine Fibbers, and I always thought that's one guy who I wish I could play guitar like."

"There are songs that are extremely stark and sparse, together with the bluster of distorted armies of guitar sound," reprises Cline. "There's all of that, and throughout my career I've always naturally gravitated towards diversity as far as styles go."

All of this is borne out when I catch up with Wilco live at Portsmouth's Wedgewood Rooms, a few days before their appearance at Glastonbury Festival. With a line-up that includes Cline, new keyboard player Pat Sansone, drummer Glenn Kotche, Mikael Jorgenson on piano and laptop, plus veteran Wilco bassist John Stirratt, leader Jeff Tweedy now finds himself among the most imaginative musical company in Wilco's somewhat tempestuous career. Throughout their two hour set, Wilco seamlessly fuse pop, rock and improvisation. Pushed along by Tweedy's stream of consciousness lyrics, the group continually launch themselves into vast churning chasms without ever losing direction. At one point Cline and Tweedy's guitars clash in an improvisational embrace that

fleetingly flashes back to punk's glory days. But the true glory of new Wilco is the rapturous applause that follows their staging of one of *A Ghost Is Born*'s two uncompromisingly experimental tracks, "Spiders (Kidsmoke)", a warped Krautrock workout which, on a conductor's nod from Tweedy, suddenly jolts into a stadium rock exercise that causes the entire front row to reach for their ear guitars.

"I think we're Jeff Tweedy's orchestra," laughs Cline. "One of the satisfying things about this group is that it's orchestrally dynamic."

"In many ways the new Wilco line-up has already made *A Ghost Is Born* obsolete in my mind," enthuses Tweedy, "and I can't wait to start making the next one. The architecture of the line-up we have right now is completely designed to pursue the basic philosophies we've been attempting to get across for a long time."

On the eve of Wilco's *A Ghost Is Born* tour, Jeff Tweedy checked himself in to a Chicago rehab centre to kick his addiction to the prescription painkillers he was taking to combat migraine headaches. Thankfully the condition, along with the related panic attacks, appears to be history for the man who ambles into the hotel conference room and seats himself at its big, tall table. He apologises for the toasted sandwich he's just ordered, explaining that he hasn't eaten all day. Tweedy is wearing the same cockroach print baseball cap he wore onstage the night before – apparently it was picked out for him by his eight year old son Spencer, who, he proudly says, is following in his dad's footsteps by playing drums in The Basters. Tweedy's cockroach cap chimes well with the work of Gladys Nilsson, of the late 1960s Chicago art group Harry Who, whose drawings inside the *A Ghost Is Born* booklet illuminate the record's fascination for the animal kingdom. "I fucking adore her art," Tweedy declares, "and every time I looked at her picture of two creatures with locked beaks [in the booklet's centrefold] it really seemed to express a lot of what the record was about to me. All of her drawings evoke what was going on on the record. Everything kind of looks a little bit like a bee or a bird, but not sure."

"I was trying to write from the perspective of animals and bugs to subvert some sort of first person narrative," he continues. "Of course, it ends up being more personal than anything else."

Ever since he was first driven to form his punk group The Primitives (spelt thus to avoid problems with a marginally better known British group called The Primitives) as a teenager in Belleville, Illinois seeking to emulate his hero Mike Watt, Tweedy has been pursuing a personal music. That pursuit peaked up momentum after the breakup of his alt country group Uncle Tupelo, in which he was overshadowed by songwriting partner Jay Farrar. Soon after their demise, Tweedy regrouped with Uncle Tupelo's bass guitarist John Stirratt, Dobro and lap steel player Max Johnston and drummer Ken Coomer, to form Wilco. In 1995 they moved to Chicago and signed a deal with Reprise Records on the strength of Uncle Tupelo's success. That group's Country rock leanings are still clearly audible on Wilco's debut, *AM* (1995). They followed it a year later with the more ambitious double album *Bang Your Head*, on which they were joined by guitarist Jay Bennett. The first strains of Tweedy's avert leanings leak through on the opening "Misunderstood", whose resonating guitar and violin introduction instantly pels back the ears, retraining them to hear the deeply grooved experimental pulses throbbing beneath the surface of the album's deceptively simple pop songs. By *Summerteeth* (1999), Bennett's complex and flamboyant arrangements of

Tweedy's increasingly intricate and mephisto-lyrics were teeming with subliminal references to *Senile* Brian Wilson and Big Star's supremely damaged *Seiler Lovers*. With *Summerteeth* Wilco were learning to use the recording studio as an instrument – for Tweedy, an ambient advance. "My early experiences in the recording studio made me very suspicious of it," he sighs. "I didn't understand how it worked and this resulted in outsiders having more impact on the way we sounded on record than we did. On *Uncle Tupelo* we were almost purist in our approach to recording, we rarely did overdubs, except on our second album. In our opinion the only way we could retain our musical purity was by creating limitations for ourselves. We looked at being in the studio as being more of a documentary artform. I do still believe in that to a degree. I think you do end up being more creative and innovative with less."

"A lot of modern recording creates the illusion that you have infinite possibilities at your fingertips," he continues, "but I don't want infinite possibilities. All that results in an endless decision making, and that's not an acceptable creative process for me." Even so, he concedes, "It was the first record where we began to use overdubs and finally come to terms with multitrack recording techniques."

For all Tweedy's reservations, *Summerteeth*'s favourable reception encouraged the group to break their habit of essentially treating albums as studio recorded performances. Indeed, the making of its successor, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, couldn't be further removed from that notion. Its lengthy studio gestation involved experimenting with and amassing so many textures and parts that they ended up bringing in Jim O'Rourke to assist with its birth. The protracted rebirth of *one more* alt country specialists Wilco into electronic rockers was not without casualties. It saw the loss of Tweedy's melodically aligned guitar partner Jeff Bennett and longserving drummer Ken Coomer.

In the period they took to make *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, finally released in 2002, Wilco completed two volumes of *Mermaid Avenue*, their collaboration with UK singer-songwriter Billy Bragg, on which they scored arrangements for the unmissable songs of folk guru Woody Guthrie and in December 2000, Tweedy embarked on a series of solo acoustic shows, during which he invited experimental musician and drummer Glenn Kotche up onstage to play with him.

"The first time I realized that I wasn't going to feel right playing with any other drummer was when I did an acoustic show with Glenn in Chicago," explains Tweedy. "He had shown up at the gig, and rather than get up on stage alone with an acoustic guitar again I asked him if he felt like playing with me. We brought a little drum kit from my studio, set it up on stage, and he played the whole set with me. It felt like he had been playing the songs for years, there was just so much communication between us going down."

Tweedy's enthusiasm for Kotche's stayingly finely drawn out drummer Coomer, who was finding it difficult to come to terms with Wilco's new direction, was a good rapport," confirms Kotche. "From the beginning I was encouraged to explore my own sound as opposed to replacing what Ken Coomer had done. Ken's traditional rock drumming technique wasn't really working on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, which had been envisioned with soundscapes and stuff. At that time I'd quit playing in rock bands altogether to concentrate on more experimental material. When I joined Wilco I was encouraged to bring all my little sounds with me." Kotche arrived at a critical point in the group's existence, when they brought in another guitarist Leroy Bach and, to add to the confusion, Tweedy had agreed to let him make and Wilco fan Sam Jones

document them attempting to get *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* back on track – as seen in the film *I Am Trying To Break Your Heart* (2002).

"The group had been recording *YHF* for almost a year before I came in," continues Kotche. "Many of the songs were not happening, so they had different versions where they would build the tracks on top of each other. I added layers of drumming and percussion which, as a result, triggered off new overdues." The major obstacle to the full realisation of Wilco's new direction, however, was guitarist Bennett, who set out to squeeze as many pop elements as the mix could take. For Tweedy, who was left to mould them into some sort of shape, the situation was becoming unbearable. "He was expecting me to make decisions out of loyalty which is not the way it works," groans Tweedy. "In my opinion it had to be what sounded best. During the final stages of recording *YHF* I had really reached the end of my rope with trying to work with Jay. I knew it wasn't going to work, and I also knew that somebody else would have to become involved in order to finish the record."

Eventually they brought in sonic scientist Jim O'Rourke to somehow pull the album together. As soon as O'Rourke began mixing the album, Tweedy was convinced that they had made the right decision. "We mixed the song 'I Am Trying To Break Your Heart', and from that point on it felt ridiculous to try and make the rest of the record work with anybody else," he enthuses. "Finally I was working with someone who was totally sympathetic to the things I wanted to hear."

"At that point *YHF* was complete chaos," concurs Kotche, "but when we turned it over to Jim he miraculously managed to make the layers of different sounds into pop songs. He's really brilliant at letting the song evolve while he's mixing. None of those messes is flat and each section of every song has a new scene change. That's what gives the album its character. It has different parts from different points in the band's career running through it." What distinguishes *YHF* from previous Wilco albums is its masterful blending of sampled noise and electronic effects into the group's bubbling pop. It's tempting to assume that this is the handwork of outsider O'Rourke. "Everybody thinks that he added the experimental element to the record," sighs Kotche, "but what he actually did was to scale everything back to the bare bones before adding different elements from the various layers."

"All the weird elements were already there," confirms Tweedy, "but Jim knew how to work with the material and highlight it. More important was his ability to pull things out to make the song structures become apparent again. Sometimes making a successful song shape meant that the original chords had to be pulled out because they weren't as exciting or inviting to our ears as the things that had been layered on top of them. When the musical guts were pulled out of it, the added noise took on a more solid shape and became part of the basic architecture of the song. This obscured the original chord changes and made them more interesting."

The process of salvaging *YHF* from the mountains of material they amassed for it strained the group's relationship with guitarist Bennett to breaking point. "Jay was acting in this weird way, like he was second in command," sighs Tweedy uncomfortably. "He was saying things like, 'Well, if I hear Jim [O'Rourke] do a pop song, and it's cool, then I'll sign off.' But nobody's asking you to sign off. What are you talking about? This sounds fucking awesome! So he didn't become involved at all in the mixing of *YHF*. Shortly

after that we decided that we couldn't work with him any more."

To make things worse, Reprise rejected the finished album and demanded unspecified changes. Wilco refused, only to be ejected from the label. What did Reprise find so objectionable about *YHF*? "I'm still really curious about that too," puzzles Tweedy. "Every record we made for Reprise has been problematic for them. *AM* was too Country. *Born* there was a double album, that's a problem. *Summerbeetle*: why isn't it Country any more? *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, 'That's it'! We can't work with you guys any more." Their goals were constantly shifting.

"Another thing that's really mystifying to me is how some people think Wilco are so weird," he continues. "Yankee Hotel Foxtrot was the most contemporary and straightforward record we had ever made. To me it sounded like a further step forward from the things we were trying to do on *Summerteeth*, but not so that it became inaccessible."

Undaunted by the rejection of what many now consider their finest work, Wilco finally walked away from their Reprise deal with a \$50,000 pay-off and the tapes for *YHF*, which they streamed on the Internet and took to the road to promote the material. The subsequent attention resulted in *YHF* being licensed to Nonesuch – like Reprise, a division of AOL Time Warner. The album went on to sell 450,000 copies, fully vindicating the group's commitment to experiment. Tweedy chuckles at the irony. "Our attitude towards Reprise was, we were never signed to a contract that stated we have to make records which adhere to your preconceptions."

Wilco had already begun work on *A Ghost Is Born*, with Jim O'Rourke mixing, co-producing and contributing various instrumental parts, while they were touring *YHF*. Tweedy had fashioned a specific musical template for "Spiders (Kidsmakeit)", using a forgotten computer program complete with a beat in drum machine. "I started programming drum beats and came up with something that really reminded me of *Neu!* and that motorik style of Krautrock," he recalls. "I thought it would be exciting to see what could happen with it, so I made some demos for the song with an acoustic guitar and the drum machine."

"When we got in the studio, though, the problems we knew were there with the song really became apparent. There were too many melodic elements for it to really be a Krautrock song; it had too many chord changes. If we were really going to go for this motorik style it had to sound more hypnotic, so we pulled out all the chords and just left it on the E. That's all we originally intended to do with it but as we were playing the song the 'Van Halen' parts of the previous version was thrown in because it fit so perfectly."

The "Van Halen" part Tweedy's talking about is a gloriously cranked out part that could have been played by the group in "shiny shiny pants" at the centre of the sweetly sardonic *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* song, "Heavy Metal Drummer". The evident joy Wilco derive in performing it live and on record而言, reveals how they never set out to gain their vanguard position by sacrificing the rock 'n' roll pleasures that seal "Spiders (Kidsmakeit)" as a landmark track in *A Ghost Is Born*'s sonic evolution. However the album's highlight is "Less Than You Think", a sardonically self-descriptive song that steadily mushrooms into a 15 minute drone improvisation. "The song came first," emphasises Tweedy, "and, in my opinion, it always sounded like because there wasn't enough there. I wanted it to be a song that talked about itself, only it never felt like it could quite get there. We originally

thought it would be a funny idea to have the longest song on the record called "Less Than You Think", so on one level it was exciting to attempt to make this epic. Then the idea came about that, since the song is a meditation on free will, why don't we finish it without any human interaction. So we set up an installation and recorded different instruments playing themselves in a room for as long as we could stand it. Then we returned, changed them slightly and recorded it again. We did this for 30 minutes and threw in the original song. When it got to the end of the song we did a live performance mix that felt like the right length."

The song, with its drone explorations, finally catches up with and consolidates a longstanding fascination of Tweedy's for experimental music predating his student days. Listening to John Cage and Morton Feldman records in his college library. "I also went out and bought John Cage's book *Silence*," he adds, "which was as influential to me as hearing his music. Through books like *Silence* I began to find the fringes of the avant garde in literature as well."

Indeed, long before he had the confidence to let it show in Uncle Tupelo and Wilco, Tweedy's experimental bent first revealed itself through his youthful games with home recording equipment. "My dad had a very early karaoke machine which used eight-track tapes. You could record yourself and then transfer the recording on to a cassette. I would use this machine to make my own eight-track tapes and just dub back and forth on it – like the most primitive two-track system in the world – making sound installations in my room. I would record these long, droning bowed bass things, or nattle glass and tarchins for hours on end. That's all I would do in my spare time. It was totally nuts."

"I had a lot of misconceptions about experimental music and noise, even though it was something I was extremely passionate about," Tweedy continues. "What I adhered to early on was this idea that if you were going to be an artist you had to learn how to draw really well before you could start subverting the forms. I now think that's a really damaging way to look at creativity."

Fortunately, the current Wilco personnel share Tweedy's Fluxus faith in the liberating play of machines given their own head. "I have such a fond memory of the end section of 'Less Than You Think,'" affirms keyboardist Mikael Jorgenson, just returned from his mother's funeral in time to rejoin Wilco for their Glastonbury festival appearance. "We were in the control room, hearing how it sounded in the studio through the control room monitors. Then I remember having this delicious treat of being able to go back into the live room – after having got used to how it sounds as a two-track mix. To actually be able to step out, walk through it and hear the difference was fantastic. Because that's not going to happen ever again."

"To me, all those conceptual reasons for it being on the finished record are great," agrees Tweedy, "but none of it would have made any sense to me if I didn't honestly believe it was beautiful. That's my favourite song on the record."

He leans back, his attention momentarily distracted by his now cold toasted sandwich. "I prefer it cold anyway," he laughs, concluding "I was listening to the track while driving around Chicago, so that I could sequence the finished album – and the city suddenly started looking different. I think that's always the best sign, when you're listening to something that causes your environment to take on a different feel or shape." □ *A Ghost Is Born* is out now on Nonesuch



THE PRIMER: NOISE

A BI-MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE CORE RECORDINGS
OF A PARTICULAR ARTIST OR GENRE

THIS MONTH: DAVID KEENAN REMOVES HIS EARPLUGS AND CRANKS THE STEREO UP TO INFINITY AS HE PLUNGES INTO THE VORTEX OF NOISE MUSIC, FROM THE EARLY FEEDBACK EXPERIMENTS OF LOU REED VIA INDUSTRIAL GRIND TO TODAY'S DIGITAL SOUND ABUSERS.
ILLUSTRATION: SAVAGE PENCIL



If pop is music is daytime, a nine to five soundtrack regulating work and consumption, then noise is its night, populated by the squat shapes and inchoate shadows of desire and alienating despair. In contrast to music manufactured under the surveillance glare of pop, noise provides a cover of dark that encourages both experimentation and criminal acts. Noise generates the perfect conditions for interrogating control and jamming its channels. Noise is the metropolis of logos. And it infuses the notion that everything is consensual, that communication is paramount, that music must be about pleasure. That's why the noise of artists like Throbbing Gristle, Boyd 'Nob' Rice and Whitehouse is so often associated with atrocity images of transgressive sex, power and violence.

Lug Russolo is widely credited as being the first major noise theorist with his 1913 *Art Of Noises* manifesto. And, of course, composers like Arnold Schoenberg, John Cage and Karlheinz Stockhausen played their part in breaking with classically established harmonic systems. As Cage himself noted, in the sleeve notes to his 1942 collaboration with the poet and author Kenneth Patchen, *The City Wears A Stouch Hat*: "In writing for these sounds, as in writing for percussion instruments alone, the composer is dealing with material that does not fit into the orthodox scales and harmonies. It is therefore necessary to find some other organising means than those in use for symphonic instruments. As more experimental orchestras are established and as more composers enter this field, more of its problems will be solved."

Lou Reed's epochal *Metal Machine Music* signposted a way of breaking free of the impasse created by the endgames of the mid-20th century avant garde, simultaneously functioning as a critique of music and as a means of its rehabilitation. But contemporary noise artists like The New Blackaders and Ernsturzende Neubauten were the first to progress from the use of noise as assault on tonality to the development of a rich, complex language capable of subtleties of shade and nuance without sacrificing any of its ferocious power or ability to unlock repressed personae in the listener.

Shatter the harmony and you shatter the social structure, goes one noise dictum. Opposed to control, it follows that noise always contains the seeds of its own destruction. From Throbbing Gristle's paramilitary posturing to Leibach's totalitarian pastiche, noise seemingly embraces notions of discipline, regimentation and control, the better to understand and undermine them. If noise seemingly encourages an appetite for destruction, it's only out of a desire to liberate a repressed appetite for reconstruction.

Many contemporary artists have used noise as a functional base, from free jazz through the conceptual sound art of The Sonic Arts Union and the lamellar improvisations of AMM and MEV. It has also thoroughly inflected and reinvented rock music, thanks to artists like Man, John Zorn, Fushisusha and Sonic Youth, all of whom helped to bring noise out of the dark and into the light. But this Primer is about those artists who bypass genre conventions in their wholesale embrace of noise.

LOU REED METAL MACHINE MUSIC

REED CO 1975

"If you ever thought feedback was the best thing that ever happened to guitars," wrote Lester Bangs in an

appreciation of *Metal Machine Music* that ran in *Cream* in 1976, "well, Lou just got rid of the guitars." Lou Reed's 1975 solo album is the noise album par excellence, a blueprint for the deluge to come. All future noise tropes are already present and incoherent: the artificial extension of the medium through the use of locked grooves as cycles to infinity, the manipulation of the protesting screams of overdriven electronics and the usurpation of uniformly unwavering stereo balance in favour of telescoping zooms of volume that surge like tower blocks from ear to ear.

At times Reed has talked of *Metal Machine Music* as being completely self-generating, a closed feedback system that he simply set into motion and occasionally tweaked; at others he has straight-forwardly insisted that he "coded" it with quotes from Mozart and Beethoven. Either way, it's worth recalling that Reed was one of the earliest rock musicians to use noise as 'visual' colour. The Velvet Underground's second album *White Light/White Heat* (1968) was the place where conventional musical hierarchies were first torched. The 17 minute "Sister Ray" progressed from a monolithic three chord R&B jam into a four way face-off, with each player raising the volume stakes to the point where the whole piece became gridlocked by feedback. But the moment when rock really took attorney off-pitch and the death pangs of manhandled equipment as the basis of a whole new syntax comes during Reed's guitar solo on "I Heard Her Call My Name" from the same LP. Inspired by Reed's famous cry of "And then my mind split open", his noise solo, achieved through the use of a hand-held Vox distortion box, incorporates notes that sound as if they're cracking under the pressure of distortion, with any notion of melody forced to take a backseat to fuzz, friction and volume. In noise terms, "I Heard Her Call My Name" is the splitting of the atom. *Metal Machine Music* is the resultant meltdown.

THE LOS ANGELES FREE MUSIC SOCIETY

THE LOWEST FORM OF MUSIC

REEDCO/STHE CORTICAL FOUNDATION 1980 1979-1984

Read their name as a manifesto, The Los Angeles Free Music Society set out to liberate music from the tyrannical demands of melody, structure, rhythm and associated ideas of performance. Through DIY street events and radio happenings they conflated punk aesthetics and high art theory; and with their invention and deployment of homemade noise generators like Tom Recchion's "Mock Cello" and "Strungaphone" they aligned themselves with a tradition of American instrument builder-composers stretching back to Harry Bertoia and Harry Partch.

Leading the assault were career weirdos Le Forte Four, whose insane 1975 LAFMS debut, *Bikini Tennis Shoes*, takes up most of the second CD of the world-beating ten disc overview of one of the profoundest and most volatile of American noise cultures. Le Forte Four were founded on the electronic experiments of Rick Potts and Chip Chapman, who by the time of their first LP had been joined by Jon and Tom Potts. With its relatively self-explanatory highlights like "Some Problem With The Cord Of Something", "What Do You Do, Radiator?", and "Fade It Out", *Bikini Tennis Shoes* is an archetypal slice of benign LAFMS subversion. But LAFMS affiliates like Arway and Smegma were the ones who built upon the charred foundations. Arway's 1978 album *Live At LACE*, included in the box, is one of the Society's heaviest interventions, with Dennis

Duck's autistic saxophone, Rick Potts's mandolin, Vetzar's post-Yoko Ono vocals, Juan Gomez's bass and Tom Recchion's rocking drums illuminated in flashes of ear-thick electricity courtesy of Jon Potts and Chip Chapman's grimly refined circuitry.

"Music without musicians was the idea," claims Ju Suk Reet Mehta, vocalist in Smegma, whose regressive noise/jazz/rock hybrid *Glamour Girl* 1941 LP (1979) is a levelling slice of post-rock sound well before that term became shorthand for indie pop with chops. The cover features a great collage of a starlet in a gaemisk. As Chip Chapman explains: "We saw the future, we knew it would come, we got it out of our system and we got upwind before it stank."

THROBBING GRISTLE

RAT CLUB, PINDAR, LONDON 22/5/1977
MUTE CD

RAT CLUB, VALENTINO ROOMS, LONDON
17/12/1977
MUTE CD

ZYKLON B ZOMBIE/UNITED INDUSTRIAL 17 1984

Operating out of London between 1975-81, Throbbing Gristle were the first group to fully realise noise's ability to defuse and disrupt systems of control and to provide a release for powerful psychic and sexual energies. In accordance, they set up their live shows as magical rallies where rudimentary musicianship, aggressive machine noise, mirrors, suspect tapes, strobes and industrial ion generators combined to short-circuit the traditional mono-directional performer/audience relationship. Whereas punk was essentially recuperative, hijacking and reclaiming tired rock modes, TG worked towards the destruction of music as a precursor to the reintegration of art and life. The Rat Club live recordings, drawn from the TG24 box set that bundled bootlegged tapes of their first 24 live shows, are their purest manifestation.

TG noise camouflages deliberately ambiguous tapes of conversations between children and adults. These are given a disturbing slant thanks to the murderous cacophony that brackets them, while Genesis P-Orridge's deliberately weirdo vocals mirror the ceaseless noise of the media, cutting together the manic cheerleader of sensational headlines with mocking effluvia and lurid accounts of sex and serial murder.

Cooley and Femi Tutsi uses her guitar as a noise generator; traditional rock madhouse undermined by a woman who can't 'play', while Chris Carter's homemade electronics, including an early prototype sampler, allows them access to an unnaturally exaggerated range of sounds. Modelled after The Velvet Underworld's "I Heard Her Call My Name", "Zyklon B Zombie" was the B side of their 1978 single "United". It's also featured on the Mute CD *Second Annual Report*. Named after the chemical used in Nazi death chambers, the track was deliberately recorded to sound as if it was being heard through a tunnel of fumes. P-Orridge's raw-raising vocal traded Reed's pre-emptive "mind split open" for "and then my head split open", followed by the jangling single-note death of a cheap synthesizer.

BORBETOMAGUS SAUTER, DIETRICH, MILLER

MONIC 02 1982

The trio of Borbetomagus, featuring saxophonists Jim Sauter and Don Dietrich with guitarist Donald Miller, are the most exuberant group of free improvisers ever to breathe into brass. Their very physical



Borbetomagus (above);
Tarobbing Gnistle (right)



performances are routinely described in terms of muscle and sublimated homophobia, largely down to the onstage action. But clearly there's a lot more going on. *Berbetonagus* uses noise to clear a real-time space within which the amour de personne can dissolve like candyfloss, leaving them free to assemble a meaningful syntax from volume, speed and texture. With microphones sunk deep in the bells of their saxophones, Seuter and Dietrich - friends since Kindergarten - lock horns like rutting moose, their tempos producing lightning forms close to Albert Ayler's vision of ecstatic heavenly music. Augmented with rubber hoses and plastic tubes that extend their reach, both saxophones are fed through racks of distorting effects, while Miller plays his guitar flat on its back, exciting it with toys, radios, metal bins and maracas.

The group's third LP *Saxter*, Dietrich, Miller bundles a clutch of insane live shows. Pick of the bunch is the tape from Bergen Community College in 1981, where they promptly levelled a fratboy cheese and wine party. The barbarous electric sound of their horns comes over like a live cable forced down the beer-gorged throats of unsuspecting college sports fans. "What was that," demands one, "a tune-up?" The CD also includes some choice documentation of their brief incarnation as a four-piece, with Brian Cuthbert's live electronics adding another terminal layer of colour.

BOYD RICE THE BLACK ALBUM

MUTE LP 1997

NON PAGAN MUZAK

MUTE 7" 1998

For Californian prankster and provocateur Boyd Rice, noise music is a cathartic trip-switch. His early work is mostly based on loops assembled from obscure exotica, pop and easy listening records, cut up and reconfigured to highlight nuances normally held in check by therapeutic structures. Recorded in 1975, the self-released *The Black Album* can be played at any speed, its queasy, groaning loops resembling motion-sick carnival tunes, all accoring ominous intent through brain-boring repetition. "I think I created something that blanks out your brain, leaving a vacuum and allowing new thoughts to form," Rice explains. "I wanted to create something that would run all the thought out of people's heads... I wanted to create a form of stimulus that would bypass the mind, a form not rooted in the mind that would hopefully give rise to an experience more primal in nature. I wanted to do something that would turn the organism as a whole."

1978's *Pagan Muzak* is credited to Rice's Non alter-ego, and it remains the most inspired noise single ever recorded - not to mention the longest, with each track running until its locked groove gives out. You'd need a degree in advanced maths to work out the number of ways you can hear its 17 locked grooves playfully at 16, 33, 45 and 78 rpm speeds on either of two centre holes.

EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN KALTE STERNE: EARLY RECORDINGS 1980-82

MUTE CD 2004

"DAS SCHABEN" FROM HALBER MENSCH

POTOMAK CD 1985

Berlin's Einstürzende Neubauten were one of the first modern noise groups to assemble an instrumental

armoury from almost entirely non-musical sources, instead using the noise of the city itself: jackhammers, drills, etc. Andrew Unruh, the group's main instrument inventor, built huge percussive constructions from scavenged industrial parts, metal springs, bins and rusty power tools.

Their early work, as documented on the *Kalte Sterne* compilation covering 1980-82, is extremely pared down, most of it studio-treated metal-on-metal harshness. Although for much of the disc they're still exploring the question of what to do with metal besides hammering it, their solutions are never less than thrilling. Blixa Bargeld's voice incorporate spitting, strangled throat noises and guttural ones, while Unruh and FM Einheit sand, drill and pound sump. With its spliced radio snippets, "Tagesschau-Dub" is the closest circuit-sound of pre-unification Berlin. The city's isolation helped fuel the experimental music scene's sense of itself as a covert operation turning the tools of the state against itself.

Originally a bonus 7" that came with 1985's *Halber Mensch* and resuscitated in its nine minute glory on the latest CD reissue, the aptly titled "Das Schaben" ("The Scraping") is a preliminary sketch for "Der Tod ist Em Candy". This beautifully obtuse example of the sophisticated serial palette that Neubauten had early on evolved from the sound of scraped metal highlights the way they supercharge and eroticise metal sonorities, predating the flesh-metal orgasm of later Japanese noise.

WHITEHOUSE DEDICATED TO PETER KURLEN

SUSAN LAWY CD 1991

Widey hailed as the *Never Mind The Bollocks* of noise, Whitehouse's fourth album made explicit the parallels between noise's assault on musical structure and devout criminality. Kurten was a notorious serial murderer and sadist who was executed in Germany in 1931 after confessing to the murders of 68 adults and children. On the way to the gallows, he purportedly asked, "Tell me, after my head has been chopped off, will I still be able to hear, at least for a moment, the sound of my own blood gushing from the stump of my neck? That would be the pleasure to end all pleasures."

By dedicating the album to Kurten and including "Piper Territory", about the arrest of UK serial killer Peter Sutcliffe, Whitehouse cast nose as the cover of night that facilitates such atrocities. Whitehouse, then the two of William Bennett, Peter Molloy and Paul Reuter, set the album as a sonic imagining of the interior landscapes of a serial murderer, with the aural withdrawal implicit in noise here emblematic of a profound failure to connect.

If there's a heavy dose of misanthropy to Whitehouse, there's a countervailing of grief, and although *Dedicated To Peter Kurten* is unrelentingly bleak, it's also one of the most anguished noise records ever. Like its harrowing follow-up, *Buchenwald*, it feels like a wake for liberal-humanist notions of humanity in the face of murder, rape, power, violence and abuse. *Dedicated To Peter Kurten* lines up with those works of art that refuse to be palliatives, that exhaust solutions and instead pose unanswerable questions. It also highlights the emotionally and morally manipulative aspects of art and the way it mediates, and thus reduces or skewers experience. In other contexts, say Death Metal, it may be possible to react to its subject matter in a 'neutral' way, the

celebratory, cathartic nature of the music neutralising its connection with the reality of murdered children and the horrific suffering of their families. But Whitehouse don't permit you to experience *Dedicated To Peter Kurten* on that level. Harsh electronic sounds pull you back to the reality of violent crime. Crucially, the music is as psychotic as the acts it documents, with tracks sometimes consisting of just two sounds, one a piercingly high, unearthly hiss, the other a vacant roar of static, with effects miming Bennett's hysterical vocals. By refusing to explain the title dedication, the level of disturbance is doubled, requiring you to face up to your motives for buying the record. By refusing any mediating context, Whitehouse hold up a mirror in which you can make out the dim outline of yourself, Whitehouse force you to conclude that Peter Kurten wasn't a monster but a human being.

THE NEW BLOCKADERS CHANGEZ LES BLOCQUEURS

WHITEWASH DEMO LP 1982

FERIAL CONFINE THE FULL USE OF NOTHING

FUSETRON LP 1989

Released in a tiny run on their own label in 1982, *The New Blockaders* debut, *Changez Les Blocqueurs*, turned the international noise scene on its head. In a shed in their parents' back garden, Richard and Philip Rupenius conceived a bastard form that merged the Industrial fury of early Throbbing Gristle with acoustic improvisation. Their surreal timbral juxtapositions revealed a feel for the physical properties of sound, even as their approach was pure punk. With the creak of wheelchair harnesses and the sounds of broken glass wavy with microphone feedback and bowed metal, the album was a subversive restaging of Neubauten's salvage rituals.

Key New Blockaders collaborator Andrew Chalk, now a member of Mmor with Christoph Heemann, also ran a solo project, *Ferial Confine*, through much of the 80s and 90s, although the available recorded evidence is thin on the ground. Originally a cassette-only release, *The Full Use Of Nothing* (1985) was later reissued on vinyl by Fusetron. All of its sounds are generated by exciting huge plates of hung metal string with contact mics. The cryptic title signifies the alchemical processes by which Chalk draws an impossible range of sounds from a single degraded source.

LAIBACH MB DECEMBER 21, 1984

MUTE CD 1998

Well before they set their sights on lampooning the fascist tendencies inherent in the most innocuous mainstream rock, Laibach were a fearsome noise group. Their bombastic and all-consuming sound was dedicated to jamming signals long enough to facilitate the return of the repressed, thereby allowing submerged histories and archetypes to rise to the surface and thus be fully exercised. In this controversial spirit, they called themselves Laibach, after the German name for Ljubljana, capital of Yugoslavia's westernmost republic of Slovenia. The name has resonated through the region's complex history, most notably during the Nazi occupation. On forming shortly after Tito's death in 1980, Laibach were almost immediately banned, forcing them to advertise early concerts using nothing but their insignia, a Malevich-style black cross. MB December 21, 1984, documents their early performances.

Clockwise (from left):
Boyz' Paul Stookey;
Entertaining Neukomel's Bixx Bangelid;
Whitehouse's William Bennett



Laibach's project was a dangerous one mounted at great personal risk, seeing how their first decade was played out in the unwilling communist state of Yugoslavia. Laibach juggled opposing totalitarian symbols in an attempt to separate reality from the imprint of history. Setting out to expose the dangers inherent in any totalitarian system, Laibach demonstrated the sheer volume required to begin bringing down the wall of state generated noise.

Correspondingly their performances focused on noise's most martial elements. MB is dominated by thunderous percussions, blasts of electricity and great hangers full of tonal drone. The group's noise is necessarily beyond control, much of it generated by the heated debate surrounding Laibach's right – or otherwise – to espouse such ambiguous politics. In time, it became clear that, in projecting a state organism modelled after failed regimes onto the rapidly disintegrating Yugoslav communist federation of republics, Laibach were essentially offering themselves as the sacrificial scapegoat of its pending collapse into democracy.

It was a dangerous game, to be sure, posing very real threats to the group, who had to be absolutely certain of what they were doing and why. Just such scrupulousness is what makes MB, among other early Laibach collections like *Requiequiev 1980-1984*, an exemplary document.

IDEA FIRE COMPANY

ANTI-NATURAL

SWELL RADIO LP 1986

SCOTT FOUST

THE FIGHTING SENSUALIST

PINEAPPLE TAPEZ MC 1981 2002

For the past few decades, US noise has been dominated by a handful of combative loners with a penchant for self-exploratory and a wardrobe full of sonic personae. Even in a scene that includes Ron Lessard/Emil Beaufieu of RRRecords, Seymour Glass of Glands Of Extreme Secretion and Bananafish magazines, and Tom Smith aka Om Myth of To Live And Shave In LA and OHNE, Scott Foust of Idea Fire Company stands out as its most consistently fascinating player.

Recalling Wyndham Lewis's injunction that "You must talk with two tongues if you do not wish to cause confusion," *Anti-Natural*, the text accompanying Idea Fire Company's classic 1986 album, reads like a furious Vorlitzsch attack on notions of authority. On *Anti-Natural* Foust and Karin Borecky work synthesizers, keyboards, guitar and tapes into blank noise glissandos that mirror the eerie, isolated landscapes of early Aemus, Tschetchnis, Klaus Schulze and Whitehouse. Foust constantly provokes contradictory emotions, making you feel one way by using a sound of mode associated with its opposite. In the process he highlights how so much art is founded on manipulating desires. In his attempt to clear enough space to allow listeners to reclaim their own emotions, his Idea Fire Company's programme is as profoundly liberating as Throbbing Gristle's.

MERZBOW

MATERIAL ACTION 2

LOWEST MUSIC AND ARTS CHAOS LP 1983

NOISEMBRYO

THE RELEASING ESKIMO CD 1994

From Tokyo, Masami Akita's Merzbow casts a huge, undulating shadow over the whole of noise music. He's

the most prolific, instantly recognisable artist in noise. Repeatedly obliterating itself at the edge of meaning, his noise is irreducible to anything but itself. "I wanted to make music that consisted solely of the guitar-smashing parts of The Who and King Crimson," Akita explained in *The Wire* 159, and the huge mass of Merzbow's monstrous back catalogue can be seen as a celebration of rock at its most loud and destructive.

Although active since 1980, 1983's *Material Action 2* was Akita's first vinyl LP, following a mountain of cassettes released on his own Lowest Music & Art and ZSF Product labels. Featuring Akita in duo performance with longterm shadow Keyoshi Mizutani, *Material Action 2* is free improvisation liberated from the demands of communication, a series of instant decompositions where the players strain conventional musical relationships to the point that they break down entirely, thus allowing unmediated access to a realm of pure, nugatory sound.

1994's *Noisembryo* is classic Merzbow, a devouring flux of obsessive automatism and delinquent electronic improvisation. His well-documented fascination with bondage and the associated politics of dominance and submission govern his dynamic sense, holding long, suspended tones for seconds on end before disengaging with an abrupt charge. Merzbow's sound is pornographic in the most hardcore sense in that it's noise that isn't dressed up as music. There's no plot and no build-up; instead it cuts straight to the pay-off, a gonzo compilation of vivid, libidinous money shots. Like the greatest high energy rock, it's gratuitously satisfying.

HIIKOKAIDAN

ROMANCE

ALCHEMY CD 1991

INCAPACITANTS

FEEDBACK OF NMS

ALCHEMY CD 1992

CCCC

COSMIC COINCIDENCE CONTROL CENTRE

ENDURANCE FACTORY CD 1992

MASONNA

SHOCK ROCK

MIDI CREATIVE CD LTD 2002

Throughout the '90s, Japan has been the centre of gravity for all-devouring electronic noise. Japanese artists – in particular the Oaaka school formed round the Alchemy label, and home of Boredoms – have digested and regurgitated contemporary noise modes, reinvigorating them with gory Technicolor stylings and ever more extreme levels of sonic overload. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is about Japan that has helped cultivate such an exaggerated and endlessly varied noise scene without falling back on suspect ideas of national characteristics but the dialectic of chaos and control seems to be coded deep within the Japanese psyche. Rock music was never a domestic Japanese tradition. Noise was, and continues to be.

Outside Merzbow, Hiirokaidan are the most consistently devastating Japanese noise group with the deepest historical roots. They go back to the early 80s, when they started out as a free improv trio featuring Jojo Hiroshige, Noeki Zushi and

legendary guitarist Idiot O'Clock, 1980's *Romance* consists of a massive 77 minute track that builds a hurricane of sound from waves of coruscative feedback and shrill, hyperventilating vocals from Juniko, who sings in the vibratory styles of Petty Writers, Yoko Ono and Lisa Suckdog. Halfway through Hiroshige joins her on vocals, contrasting her ear-splitting tom with a baritone Sesame Street/Darth Vader delivery that's noxious enough to kill flies. "Non Stop Noise", trumps the cover, which also features some picture postcard views of sunset over ruins and beach scenes – cheap misery in other people's holidays.

Hiroshige also runs Osaka's Alchemy label – alongside Tokyo's PSF, the premier Japanese underground imprint. Alchemy released *Incapacitants' 1992 album, Feedback Of NMS*, a stupidly fantastic side from the duo of Toshiy Mikawa and Fumi Koisaki that restores noise making to the status of the primal creative act, a manifestation of pure libidinous will.

CCCC are the Hawkwind of Japanese noise, a black nightmare committed to simulating extraterrestrial communication via organic energy and electricity alone. They have a highly stylised sci-fi approach, generating combinations of shortwave chatter, modulated alien broadcasts, high wave sounds à la Whitehouse and tumbling analogue codes.

Masonna, aka Masu Yamazaki, is best known for the punishing physicality of his, necessarily brief live performances. Besides his noise work, his fetish for vintage analogue electronics and exploitation soundtracks has birthed two side projects: Space Machine, where he expands on the cosmic sounds of early Krautrock pioneers, and Christine 23 Orna, a psych-rock group that also features Fusco Tono on guitar. But at heart Masonna is all about cathartic noise, or *Evacuation Generation*, as one early release described it. 2002's *Shock Rock* is part of a major label trilogy intended to mark 15 years at the bottom for Yamazaki. It's a choice selection, 31 concentrated blasts of pure white light, a set of exacly expelled cathartic noise miniatures. It's what you always imagined punk would be like when all you'd seen were the pictures of snot and spikes.

RYOJI IKEDA

+/

TOUCH CD 1998

Unlike most Japanese noise superheroes, Ryoji Ikeda doesn't come out of the cassettes 'n' comics under-the-counter culture. Rather, his roots are in sound art and dance clubs. His best work combines sound art's obsession with the physical properties of vibration and its spatial aspects and DJ culture's use of annihilating repetition. The title *+/* immediately sets you up for the binary nature of the sonics within. This is noise as deafening silence carved from flashing, eviscerated electronic tones, *+/* forfeits the one-way assault of most Japanese noise and instead creates a more inclusive, exploratory headphones. It's still inviolate enough to map the limits of whatever room it's played in but, like La Monte Young's *Dreamhouse*, it can effect changes in it as you walk through it. Its peaks and troughs generate broken-tape rhythms that sound like the dance of tiny bird bones deep inside your ears. The parts involving long, held tones work a particular reifying magic, leaving ghosts burnt in the air in a

way that recalls the blasted auras of Yves Klein's Vampire paintings. Ikeda's researching of noise's physiological effects harks back to Throbbing Gristle's early experiments with crowd control, highlighting the race between art and the military-industrial complex for the control of people's minds. His work similarly blurs the lines between magic and science, noise and music.

PITA GET OUT

MEGO CD 1999

KEVIN DRUMM SHEER HELLISH MIASMA

MESO CD 2002

If *Entzündende Neubauten* and the Japanese actionists eroticize noise in a collision of flesh and metal, the artists associated with Vienna's Mego label alienate it from the physical once more, creating disembodied soundtracks that use noises estranged from any identifiable source. Often amplifying the cold, low-level hum that underpins modern life, whether sounding tides of abstract, theoretical code or building rhythmic chimeras from distressed digital signals, their conceptions are genuinely post-industrial.

On Pita aka Mego founder Peter Rehberg's *Get Out* (1999), the tools of earlier electronic pioneers are in place, albeit digitally updated, from the use of glitches generated by corrupted media through rhythms built from dents and clicks, barrages of pure zigzag electronics and extreme speaker phasing. The recording pivots around the staggering untitled third track, a bombastic assault that deflates the euphoric energy of dancefloor Trance with thundering, sad choicies, Hendrix-style backwards phasing and Merzbow levels of mangling electricity.

Kevin Drumm's machine music is scored for a fleet of divergent voices, from static lists of bottom end through infamously treasured guitars and the sound of microphones eating the air. *Sheer Hellish Miasma* (2002) is pure grindcore. Its intense barrage of electronic shot pads all of the dynamic, Lucifer yucks of the best Metal while simultaneously providing the intense cerebral massage of the most complex noise. If Merzbow is the guitar-smashing part of The Who and King Crimson, then Drumm is the smoke-filled aftermath, the long feedback coda from the last hanging power chord.

WOLF EYES/SMEGMA NO FACE LIVES

OR STYLIP 2003

Michigan trio Wolf Eyes' *Fuck Pete Larsen* (2003) saw liberated rock music once more cannibalising pure noise. Their meeting with LAFMS's Smegma – now bolstered by vocalist, author and long-term noise champion Richard Meltzer – effectively brings us full circle. Here Meltzer chews on pithy one-liners and the profundities of geekhood, while Smegma undermine Wolf Eyes' muscular electronic attack with the nonstop jabber of clattering plastic toys and horns. It's possibly the first appearance of a xylophone solo on a noise record. *No Face Lives* successfully marries the freeform freakout of early Red Kreyola with the occult operations of Throbbing Gristle and early LAFMS's punk underpinning of art. "Don't forget the spandex," Meltzer cautions. Metal machine music indeed. □



Clockwise
From left:
Lafms
Kevin Drumm
Miasma



Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

Death Jam 15

Human With Wizard
Funerary Music For Penitent Phobia (United Kingdom)
Elusive
Hypnotic One (Lyon) (00)
Johnny Cash
'The Money Guita' from Solitary Man (American Recordings)
Desertress Guitars
'Mind Man's City' from Sweet Of The Pit (Metal)
Varvaras
Dwelling With The Devil (Extreme Art)
Scary
'Professor' from Regn In Blood (Blackened)
Die Todesse Dosis
'Death Is A Scoundrel' (Die Todesse Dosis MP3)
Rev I'll Gates
'13' from 'Guitars In Thy String' from The Anthology Of American Folk Music (Deathmiser Folkways)
Varvaras
Dead And Glare (Metal)
Arcturus
'The Opened Ferry Across The Sty' from Vertical Brainwash And Other Works (Fylkingen)
Gavin Pidge
'Dance In The End' from Each Man Kills The Thing He Likes (Tyranny)

Blackened Housecute
'Death Is A Devil' from Iron Hellver Metallic (Pitonal)
PTL
Dance, Death! (Metal)
Clerk Rain & Lydia Lunch
'Don't Fear The Reaper' (Big Cat)
Torunes Van Zandt
'Waiting Around To Die' from Torunes Van Zandt (Torunes)

Musique Machine 15

Secret Chiefs 3
Book Of Horrors (Mystic)
Dustbengard
All Is Unnatural (Maelig)
Barrie
Feedbacker (Dovehalos)
Ukran
Black Noppe (GST) (Metal)
Desert Advisor
The Guita Recording, Vol. 1: Songs Of Pain And Moon
Songs Of Pain (Deserted)
Matthew Ray Jim Kelly
Jump On The Wireless Music Volts 1 & 2 (both released CD 06)
Sunzu (00)
White 2 (Southern Lord)
Re:Build (Apostasy)
Wind
The Inexplicable Evolution Of Time (The End/PHD)
Kazoo
Mason No 5 (PST)
Naevyzer
Slastringer (Project)
Deathgasm
Dismal (Rune Grammofon)
Meadow
A Pleasant Fiction (A Necessary Angel)
Heuu & Hissatsu Sekakoso
Ash In The Rainbow (DekuteruRei)
Mastodon
Everytwin (1966)

List 15

Brandimarie/Delidoderon/Hemisph/Steewart
Die Instabilitat Der Symmetrie (Dex/Gen)
Traxst
Higher My Friend (Hot Hot)
Steinbrüder
Circa (Lee)
Master Mutter
Eighty Eight Minutes (For 4 Ears)
Trusk Morris Jan Arloswik
1+3+1 (Sloop)
Possenz
L'Amour (Haus/Tsch)
Orpheus Yorkville & Nebulae/Teknem
Turbulans And Caregivers (Head)
Blissie Ratzberg
Adieu HB (Gates Of The Elemental)
Tyr/Thalassa & Christopher Wills
Invisible Architecture (Archaeoptery)
Werner Darschkow/Praes/Hautalogen/
Sednikov Mikhael Tibury
Aurora (Metal)
Morton Feldman
late Works With Clarinet, Per Capit Ritornello Et Le
Quatuor Diotima (Metz)
Tschkunow/Mannure
Hab' No Man - Board 3 (Moshé)
Richard Chamber
Two Locations (Lee)
Chicago Underground Two
Sister (Metal)
Stephen Merritt/Radioband Meus/Jasen
Schlesier/Timelind
Quality Hotel (Ond)

The Office Ambience

Prop & Echo
The Equatorial States (Opal)
Meteo/Orpheus/Boxx: Youth With Friends
Hab' No Man (Moshé)
Up-light
Fer Psychodelic Places (Sloop)
Double Mix And The Reverb
Well Of Heaven (Moshé)
Gwyn Arloswik
Gwyns Fears The Estate (Truck)
Unsaja
Love (Moshé/21st Century Dubwise (Blood And Fire))
Sasha Piroz
Death's Paist (Archaeoptery)
The Velvet Underground
Live At Mo's Kansas City Deluxe Edition
(Dex/Gen/Moshé)
Cat
Black Antlers (Threshold House)
Test Of Light
Test Of Light (Straight Furniture Cat)
7 Years Robert Cyclo
Wind Machines (Free Perception Society)
Housekappa
Live Gyro (Moshé/PDF)
Heuu & Hissatsu Sekakoso/Luc Ferrer
Intra-Music Acoustique (Blue Chipoptery)
Ridikan
Justification (Thrill Jockey)
TV Party
Power Of Friends And Devoted Lovers
(Sloop Bey)

Compiled by The Goo Goo

Compiled by www.musiquemachines.com

Compiled by Hervé Bieglozou, List Records
www.list-ec.com

Compiled by The Wim Sound Systems

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicists, readers, etc. Email: charts@thearm.co.uk

Postal to the metal: Write to effects (see page 360)



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London, UK

Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl

A brace of lush new recorded collaborations featuring laptop improvisor Ikue Mori provide a fillip to Julian Cowley's 'listening ear'



SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS: IKUE MORI (LEFT) AND ZEEENA PARKINS IN THE PHANTOM ORCHARD

ZEENA PARKINS & IKUE MORI PHANTOM ORCHARD

WEISS CD

NEPHISTA ENTOMOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

TAOCD001 CD

"The word in the hand is the sound in the eye is the sight in the listening ear," wrote Californian poet Robert Duncan. Ikue Mori, relocated from Tokyo to New York since 1977, is a musician acutely sensitive to that rare faculty of sight in the listening ear. She has acknowledged that her primary inspiration is visual, the impact of cinema, a desire to make paintings that are heard. Her 1998 *Tzadik* release *B/Sides* was an overt acknowledgement: music for the films of radical director Alxigal Chish, soundtracks made with Mori's clum machine and sampler plus help from organist Anthony Coleman, Andy Haas on didgeridoo and Zeena Parkins playing electric harp and accordion. Mori's association with Parkins has been long and close, but with the *Mega CD* *Phantom Orchard* their musical symbiosis has reached new levels of sympathetic integration.

In recent years Mori has made laptop computer the core component of her musical activity, a shift of allegiance celebrated with the 2001 solo computer set *Labyrinth*. The current designation of her instrumental set-up is "electronics", in effect moving emphasis away from specific hardware to a less source-oriented sense of her expressive medium. Bearing in mind her self-taught drumming with DNA, the No Wave trio she ran with guitarist Arto Lindsay and bassist Tim Wright, Mori continues to move steadily towards ever greater fluidity in her sonic explorations, effacing predetermined limits and functional constraints as she opens up curiously dreamlike abstract spaces.

Zeena Parkins is a kindred spirit in that respect. A crucial aspect of John Cage's legacy to hands-on musical practitioners has been his encouragement to approach each instrument as a total configuration, to revise its function according to creative needs and to recognise it as a field of potentialities. Parkins has spoken of the harp as a "sound machine of limitless capacity". Recognisable harp sonorities have their place in her improvising but in addition to finding unorthodox ways to sound the electric harp, she prepares and modifies the acoustic instrument, unlocking it from the gentle role long assigned by conventional usage. For *Phantom Orchard* she is heard too on piano, Mellotron, Rhodes electric piano and three vintage synthesizers – Moog, Buchla and the sordum encountered Gleem Pentaphonic Clear. Itemised by name in the sleeve notes, none of these is fetishised as museum piece or oddity, each meets an imaginative requirement.

Although there are nine jointly written tracks with moods varying from tranquil triple, trillke and drift to gougues of screeching noise, the music has the flowing unity of hallucination, surreal vision, meshes of acoustic imagery at once vividly delineated and continuously melting, illuminating rays flashed amongst psychic shadows. As in dreams, highly wrought artifice and natural growth blend in the music's play of precise fine detail and textured feeling. *Phantom Orchard* is a remarkable entwining of tastes and tendencies and a prolonged rich wash for the listening ear.

Mephista is a dedicated – as improvisers – and as composers – to the goal of collective expression. In this context, Mori's electronics interact with Sylvie Courvoisier's expressively dramatic piano and Susie Ibarra's gloriously articulate and cliche free drumming. The 18 tracks on *Entomological Reflections*, recorded in New York in November 2003,

form a sequel to the group's 2002 debut *Black Necessus*, which featured as cover art a painting by Salvador Dali. Mori has supplied a collaged image for the new release, a mock-exotic wine-framed face with plumed headdress. The title of "La Femme 100 Titus", the first track here, alludes to Surrealist artist Max Ernst's graphic text of that name. Still, overall the CD is less sumptuously homogeneous than *Phantom Orchard*. It has more widely dispersed centres of interest, more disruptive fractures and discontinuities built into the collective voice, a sustained working together of disparate elements rather than smooth fusing.

Clearly there are intrinsic differences in character between Mori's electronics and the acoustic instruments. All three musicians draw strength from that contrast. Courvoisier's style is vigorous, prone to eruption and wry diffusion. Her phrasing, however fragmented for effect, clarifies robust figures. Ibarra too is emphatic, even when she is tacking together an unlikely patchwork of ostensibly remote percussive idioms. Mori shades and seeps between the bolder contours injecting extra texture and accentuating tinges. Her contributions often make audible those moment-to-moment tensions that form in the air around and between piano and percussion, acting less as glue than as disclosing dye. In differing ways on *Phantom Orchard* and *Entomological Reflections*, Mori's subtlety and adaptability continue to set a standard for live digital music making which few of her contemporaries can consistently match. Her ability to render in sound the insubstantialities of mood and changes of atmosphere is unusually refined. Parkins, Ibarra and Courvoisier play in ways that display their deep appreciation of that ability, that sensitivity to "the sight in the listening ear". □

OREN AMBARCHI

GRAPES FROM THE ESTATE
TOUCH CD

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

Deaf Ambarchi's latest, *He tried for Touch*, begins with a smoky track exploring the soft, warm tones with which his guitar playing is most associated. The notes loop gracefully, swerving as they go. There's a well-jugged decay and an appealing capacity for low-register working. Ambarchi can treat the guitar as essentially a tone generator. Pluck and twang are suppressed and the ear is asked to home in on the repeating names themselves. But this focus on sound in itself is only half the story. It is brought together with the arch pop leanings that are given full head in Ambarchi's group Sun. The second track, "The Girl With The Silver Eyes", begins with looping tones but the atmosphere changes completely with the entry of a brush-crossed snare drum. The loops are slowly overlaid with percussion, Hammond organ and strings, spanglish guitar chords (all played by Ambarchi himself). The result is a weirdly lyrical with elegiacs floating somewhere between time and tone. The next piece, "Remedios The Beauty", at one pleasingly quacky point falls in on itself, descending away to play, low tones against resonant bells. But Ambarchi overcomes this via mix strings and a descending piano phrase that soon hangs heavy.

More satisfying is the final track, the 20 minute long "Sun昇High, Wels Spain". The weaving of the going-like mix guitar note gives the piece a sizzling ambiguity. Slowly, more surefooted material gathers around it and the piece moves into an easy-on-the-ear post-rock pastoral. Yet it's hardly challenging. There are plenty of strengths to the album: an open, improvisatory feel, a sound that's both dense and unfussy about its mix and point-clicks; a skilful layering of elements. But Ambarchi's personal third stream isn't as persuasive as some of his past work – at least, not yet.

MARK APPLEBAUM

CATFISH

TOUCH CD

BY RANDI WARDURTON

Chicago born Appelbaum studied at UC San Diego with composer Brian Ferneyhough, to whom he dedicated "Ferneyhough Remix", a two and a half minute tour de force for two percussionists and tape using samples culled from Ferneyhough's *Bass Alphabets*. It's a hasty start to a colourful survey of Appelbaum's diverse activities as composer and improviser. Even the earliest work here, the ensemble piece *Janus* begun in 1992 at the age of 25, displays a wide range of influences, from Eggerl's *Walze* to the French specimets.

It's hardly surprising that Appelbaum has based his cycle on the myth of the two-faced Roman god who looked in two opposite directions, as a feeling of bi-laterality pervades *Catfish*. From the flemoously complex flute writing of *Entre Fauveuses* IV via the intriguing self-pealing motivic schemes of *Discipline V* – from *Saumur* to *Aleksander Travels in Outer Space* to the white-note *Mortise* of *Meditation* – performed by three pianists in the upper octaves of the same piano. A "cosy" piece indeed. The steady calm that concludes *Janus* is followed by the virtuoso

froiss pitch blurria of *Drinibus Etude*.

In keeping with the tradition of his adopted state of California, Appelbaum also builds his own instruments, and the colourful assemblage of contact mixed jets he calls his *mousketeer* is featured on *Licensed to Fly*, a brief improvisation with Paul Dresher on his own self-designed quadrophonid. It's a fit mix of strange gurgles and twangs, but Appelbaum's improving skill is better represented on his recent *Transcending Intellectual Property*. By way of homage and thanks to another noble Janus, health executive producer John Zorn, the album goes out with a bang with a remix of Naked Eyes' "Snagglepuss". *Remixes*, either, as it curiously gives the impression of being twice as long as the original while having exactly the same duration – a cutting sleight of hand from a composer to watch.

BARK PSYCHOSIS

CODENAME: DUSTSUCKER
TOUCH CD

BY ROB YOUNG

I once played drums in a group that supported Bark Psychosis, at the time when they duly lived up to the prime screening tedium they imputed in their name. I usually recall a particularly hectoring evening, around midsummer 1990, in the cellar of a Cambridge college, one of those charged electric nights which might erupt into other spontaneous displays of free love, or an abandonment to violence. Both of the above occurred, I believe, but not before BP's Graham Sutton, romping up to deliver to frenzied pitch and screeching himself stupid into the mic under a *Frastorm* of a howling noise, had incurred the wrath of a professional type from upstairs, who silently and remorselessly unhooked the group's power adapters.

Between then and now I have witnessed Sutton and his group appearing at Ronnie Scott's, then unsuccessfully attempting to persuade them to play live drum 'n' bass at the ICA, debuting his Jungle project Boymiring with trumpeter Del Cudaher; sporting a silver puffy jacket at countless mid-90s club nights at East London's Blue Note, backed by the likes of Goldie, Randall and Dose Scott; finally after a lay-off, he turned up behind the counter of my local video rental shop. Now, a decade or so from BP's peer-ies retirement, Sutton has reconnected with an entirely new ensemble to reconnect with his Psychos muse.

Codename: Dustsucker, named after his recording studio in East London, could have been made the month after *Remixes* – it seems unforgivable that Sutton's breakbeat escapades. That's not to say it's ingressive. Sutton's drummer is Lee Homs, formerly of *Tek Talk* and *D. Gang* (for whom Sutton guested on their *West D* instant LP) and West Bibbons' trumpet of choice, from a floating group of ten musicians, liberal use is made of vibraphone, wood flutes, tambour, snare, melokhia and various vintage keyboard samples. Few if any groups have adopted the practice, fluttering, liquid sound favoured by Bark Psychosis. If anything, *Tonite* comes across as a similar soundworld but employed it meta-musically, rather than, as here, in the service of songwriting. It takes its place among a long and very British lineage of delicate male songwriting – a form of visionary craft practised by Nick Drake, Bill Fay, John Martyn, David Sylvian, Talk

Talk, AR Kane and others. It would be easy to dismiss this lot as feeble aesthetes, but their success lies in steering clear of sentimentality or self-pity, all thrive on an ecstatic and innovative sense of musical arrangement. The emotional velocity of the lyrics – shared between Sutton, Anja Blöchel, Rachel Dreyer and Silke Roth – gives its momentum from the Indian between individual and crowd, city and retreat.

Dustsucker's prediction is nothing short of gigantic. The colossal opening beats of "From What Is Said to When It's Read" thunder as though Vulcan was bashing on a washing machine with your head inside it. On "Burning The City", sulky guitars skitter like sick love notes while "400 Winters" indulges a carefree manta ray. Sutton may have his group under a tight rein, but it makes for a uniquely, luxuriously unblasted experience.

BIOSPHERE

AUTOUR DE LA LUNE

TOUCH CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Biosphère, aka Norwegian Jens Jensen, was commissioned by Radio France Culture to create a piece for Le Festival on Radio France et Montpellier. On acceptance, he was given duplicate keys to the station's archive. Refusing to be drawn in by its riches, Jensen instead chose to work on an early 1990s dissatisfaction of Jules Verne's *Le Voyage à Travers La Lune*, a present tale of manned moon flight, a wing from Florida to a splashdown in the Pacific. As a starting point for his new-part symphony, Jensen spliced samples of dialogue next to sounds from the MDR space station.

Autour De La Lune is a combination, building on and refining the original commission. The quantity increased, blue-tinted images of fellow Norwegian Tor-Magnus Lundby's cover painting that at the time within Jensen clearly has a nostalgic glow for the 1980s and 90s electroacoustic palette, which could sound primitive and cosmic at once.

The corporeal presence of the opening "Translation" is subsequently subsumed by an increasingly dispersed composition. A repeated tonarre makes its subtle point, shaped out of Gaspé organ matter that undulates monotonously against a growing background hum. His steady pulse acts as a lengthy scene setter, with "Rotation" becoming the tendency for ghostliness that dominates the middle section. Bass phrygian mode with slyly subtle chipping, turning this into lasting radio interference during "Madrid". Jensen is working with the very essence of minimalism, his "Devotion" hanging heavy like humidity just before the storm. The thunder never breaks. "Circles" features a different hum, a tickle chittering, its shift, leading to an almost imperceptible intensification. Another click and it drops back. Jensen has created a field where any microscopic change has an exaggerated impact on the stasis. "Departs" returns to the character of "Translation", but with fewer ambiences. By its end, it's almost not there.

"Levites" brings back the low shoulder, this the dancing "Tombent" reprises the earlier tonal contrast, but adds a third layer of trebly wiggling. Like a falling deafened victim, these movements parade at the lowest point of awareness. Certain car or kitchen speakers will render this disc

meaningless, but when heard clean, it's a mirthlessly experience. *Autour De La Lune*, Biosphère successfully forces an unnatural interest in vestigial documents.

IAN BREAKWEEL

VOCALS

Loughborough University School of Art and Design 4xCD

BY ED BAXTER

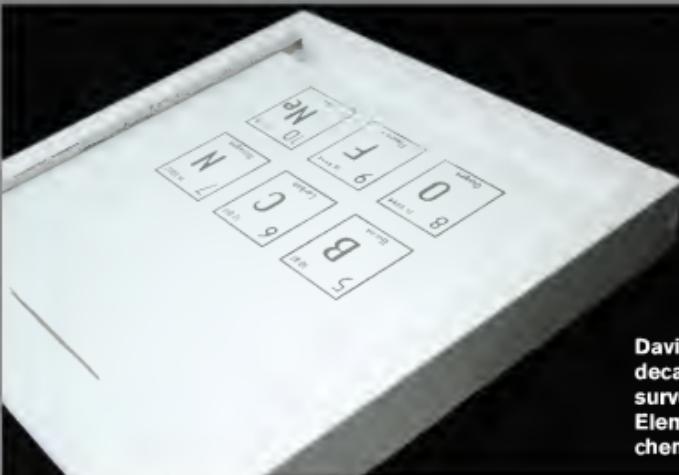
Ian Breakwell is an artist and writer whose work is often a hybrid – he "writes pictures", he has said. He's at home in video, radio, the spoken and written word. The wide-ranging collection of his audio work comprises a 1990 diary made for Radio 3, 15 newly recorded short stories, a film commentary from a journey through Durham, made in 1995, and Breakwell's one-off *Clear Spot* for the 1998 *Resonance FM* ISL (Illustrated Service License) radio art broadcasts from London's Royal Festival Hall.

The most celebrated of Breakwell's diary recordings, that of an IRA bomb exploding estate in the London street as the artist talks to a friend on the telephone, is also the most unusual. It is rare that the outside world appears so physically and dramatically in his measured, intimate reflections on the apparently necessary absurdities of social life. The bomb is an assault, swiftly thrown into relief by subsequent events, which record the trembling stiff upper lip of shell-shocked comrades a hour later in the city.

Breakwell's signature method is to observe, askance the extremely ordinary and render the subject uncanny. His exposure of the hidden dimension of transient events and his questioning of the curiosities of everyday behaviour speaks of the finely tuned observational skills of a consummate visual artist. This is portentous of a particular kind, sometimes ambivalent or sardonic, more often tender and witty.

The short stories (some as short as 24 seconds) are in character monologues which vividly bring to mind the voice, poignant and vivid inner workings of minds other than that of Breakwell the narrator. They use a few judicious sound effects to reinforce a suggestion of locale or mood but are mainly concerned with the inner life, with unconsciousness as the engine of motive and movement. *Hidden Cities, Durham* is more ambivalent, a real-time narrative made up of a travelling condenser outdoors in a bed and a "by sermon", which draws on Kafka's *The Trial*, delivered inside Durham Cathedral. Typically it is under the infinite sky that intimacy is experienced, and in the vast but palpably finite building that intimacy is contemplated.

The *Clear Spot* records the revelation of the then new internet, which puts him in touch with listeners not on his doorstep but in distant New Haven. He picks up when he realises that those he is actually listening to – and it is here that the social necessity of Breakwell's work becomes apparent, His is not the reading out performance of someone on stage but a drawing in of an equal. Amplification is not for him a means to make the small much bigger. Breakwell's sense of humour is always an articulation of his sense of proportion, the human figure, the individual's small, still physical presence in a world of fleeting impressions and becoming, half-crazed mutabiles, stolid, proud, bemused and smiling.



Elements of style: Packaging for Guitar Series

VARIOUS GUITAR SERIES VOLUMES I & II TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS NO NUMBER 2020

These releases recall the beginnings of Table Of The Elements, the independent label that set up in Atlanta, Georgia in 1993. As its opening broadside against a sleepy and indifferent rock nation, the label put out a series of 7" vinyl releases featuring individual masters of avant garde guitar, plus rock sympathisers like Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo at once toying fascinatingly in their wake and conforming their prestigious blessing on the project. These two compilations bring together releases from 1993 and 1994 respectively, from a host of names whose prolific output makes them extremely familiar to *Wire* readers – Keiji Haino, Derek Bailey, Paul Panhuysen among them. However, housed in smart wooden boxes featuring mock-Periodic Table graphics and accompanied by gusto-drenched sleeve notes, the two collections reawaken a sense of the sheer revolutionary charge of these players' operations, blasting away, albeit temporarily, the blasé fog of academic over-familiarity. "Here, guitars were not merely played. They were also abused, cheated, led to, exalted, obliterated, teased, tricked up... targeted for death, elected President... used in ways... and for purposes few could possibly have imagined." Certainly, if one had ever heard Keith Rowe, here would be the place to direct them for their first radiation treatment. The notes explain also the underlying concept of Table Of The Elements: that there are parallel cultural histories to the one given and imposed, and this is one of them.

As great a job as the notes do of barking and persuading, the submissions here, though especially fascinating to those opening their ears to them for the first time, inevitably vary in quality. Still, Keith Rowe's "We Want Some Minutes, OK?" opens the 1993 collection with typical conciseness,

slamming his guitar repeatedly as if into an invisible wall, the sonics buckling and bruised; these are sounds against which you almost feel you have to defend yourself physically. With "Variations On Key", Hans Reichel, part of a first wave of Improv guitarists, unions voluptuous, temping figures that threaten to coalesce into regular beauty but remain always just off-kilter. A very young Jim O'Rourke is featured here; his first entry, "Muni", is somewhat tentative, a little too respectful of Improv niceties and, where they exist, conventions. Only with "Michel Piccoli" does he pluck up confidence. Japan's KK Null lives up, a smidge too figuratively, to the sleeve notes' staggering proposition that "electric guitar is the enemy of the state". His heavy machinery fretboard work on "Cryonics" whines and saws away at the very germs of state apparatus. Henry Kaiser oscillates between a heavily treated exotic, set through some gamelan mangle of his own invention on "Delirium", then on "Homescapism" explodes with a veritable anagram, or deconstruction of heavy rock instrinsics.

On the second collection, Derek Bailey provides the highlights of both these collections. His "New Year Messages 1-4" are light-fingered and "playful" in a deeper, little explored sense of that word. Notes fall like sweet flakes from his fingertips, blown about in dazzling zigzags. Vivacious and un-sparsian, this is the pleasure of the string in full effect and a riposte to those who regard him as some weird, desiccated purveyor of deliberate anti-music. The layer of verbal Improv he adds on the fourth track is a crowning delight, a fractured but well-wishing communiqué that functions as a commentary on his own methods and intentions. He, more than anyone else, uses to the opportunity and occasion offered by Table Of The Elements here.

The eight brief guitar works by Keiji Haino, by contrast, are inessential. He bucks the stereotype that Japanese artists are most naturally suited to the haiku

David Stubbs assays a decade-old avant guitar survey from Table Of The Elements and finds the chemistry is still working

mode. These terse electric blasts, linkings of forest windchimes and astringent strumnings do not benefit from brevity. Rather, they feel like morsels from the great man's table. He's better in full banquet, maximalist mode. Loren Mezzadore (later Connors') four short pieces are played with a sort of winging delicacy, as if placing flowers in extreme sympathy for the pain incurred by breaking their stems. Paul Panhuysen's "The Galvano Part 1" rumbles cloudily, brooding on the same, clangy chord, while "Part 2" is rendered as if trancelike, each irregular sound played at the behest of some inner prompting.

The ventures of Sonic Youth's guitarists into Improv have divided opinion. Some are gratified at their support for the free playing community, others suspect them of seeking avant garde, academic prestige by association. The sheer duration of their ongoing investigations into this area surely dispel accusations of bad faith or dilettantism. That said, their emphasis on effects rather than physical engagement with the strings does betray their rock background here. This works well on Lee Ranaldo's "Smoke Ring (Issue 5)", its multiple, irregular pulses bombarding you like rays from all angles, less so on the crude, bellowing of Thurston Moore's "Starfield Wild", though he does redeem himself greatly with the Faustian, echo-drenched thunder of "Earth/Amp".

Since 1993, there has been a good deal of merging between leftfield rock and the avant garde, a conjoining stream of activity running concurrently with the increasingly straight river of popular rock, but no longer running into it – there has been zero evolution in popular rock guitar in the last ten years, merely a perpetually warmed over, vanished rush of tried and trudged-over Hall of Fame guitar licks. Despite periodic lapses, these Table Of The Elements collections do provide an index of guitar possibilities, parallel lines and licks for the instrument. □

DAVE BURRELL
FULL-BLOWN TRIO
 HIGH TWO CD
 BY REN WATSON

Born in 1940 in Middlefield, Ohio, Dave Burrell studied at Berklee School. You wouldn't tell this from his approach to the piano, which is weighty and persuasive, unmediated by the politeness and restraint of Mountaineer pianists. He has here comprises Wilkins Parker on bass and Andrew Cyrille on drums, musicians made famous by tenures with pianist Cecil Taylor. Burrell sounds nothing like Taylor, but his approach is parallel in that he proceeds from the actual sound of piano keys being hit rather than from abstract concepts of harmony and phrasing. There are moments where all three musicians sound like drummers, realising the crucial moment in 1962 when Duke Ellington jammed with Charles Mingus and Max Roach and reduced all periodisation of jazz to stamens.

Like Duke's, Burrell's take on jazz badness is intelligent and wild, evading the categories thrust on it by outsiders. This living Belkin's "It's Wonderful" (although retitled "They Say It's Wonderful") was played straight, as a Monkish stride number. Yet it isn't at all out of place with Burrell's own advanced compositions. He manages to make each run and chord reverberate with the history of jazz.

On "In The Balance," Parker plays kora, the West African harp, its pentatonic mode underlining the refusal of the tempered system running through Burrell's music. The lack of harmonic argument threatens a suspension of time that would be fake on a CD, but is drawn back into recognition of limits by the expressive push and pull between the three musicians. John Rosenborg's recording, live to boot-track at Systems Two in Brooklyn, has a sympathy and depth lacking in far too many American jazz recordings at the moment. Playing time is short at 40 minutes, each track devoted to exploring a different idea. Burrell is in charge and the determination and conviction of his choices are admirable. Burrell recorded his debut, *Cohn*, for BFG in Paris in 1969, and has since been most visible playing piano in saxophonist David Murray's best ensembles. This is the record to bring Burrell to the attention of all listeners who crave the unmistakable thump of authenticity.

DANNY COHEN
DANNYLAND
 AND CD
 BY MIKE BARNES

When musicians publicly praise another artist, it's often the case that the enclosed bears at least a passing musical resemblance to the endosse. So the enthusiastic description of Danny Cohen's music by Tom Waits and Kathleen Brennan as "pugnacious and dog-eared music through a bin of hoars of twisted necklions and dark sevens" promises something fleshed in Waits's Image Well. If, there are definite similarities here, there are just as many differences. They both produce a sonic disquietude, but while Waits's music is finely honed, Cohen's juxtaposes different elements.

The opener "The Devil And Danny Cohen" is full of strange angles drawn between singer and ensemble — which incorporates Meltonian lap steel, accordions and French horn as well as bass

and two drummers. Here it sounds like Cohen has stumbled into a karaoke session, found the wrong words up on the screen, but soldiered on regardless. His voice is a weathered baritone, with a guttural gneissiness when he croaks low; it's also limited and sometimes he's found poking sound for the right notes, but never quite engaging with his own tunes.

Backed by a pool of 12 musicians, including saxophonist and multi-instrumentalist Ralph Clevenger, Cohen's Dannyland is perplexxing but worth revisiting. His lyrics are extraordinary. On "Metal Beat," the sleeky, manicurist stab describes being brutally beaten by his father and his friends in an offhand, singalong manner. "Swelling" finds him checkmarking Iaiss Hayes and Barry White, before declaring, "I wish I was with Catherine Den-Oven/Pans, France inside the Louvre/But here I am, I ain't gonna move/Swelling and in the groove."

"Sibena" builds up on the back of swelling accension and guitar hoots, with Cohen called to the labour camp at the height of Soviet oppression. But the next payment of these dazed songs is "Self Awe," An acidulous yet ramshackle pastiche, it plots a serpentine path, while noodling saws "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Tomorrow Never Knows," and like Cohen says, stating, "All of my heroes have died or lost their minds/I wish John Lennon was still alive."

DUSTBREEDERS & JUNKO
MOMMY CLOSE THE DOOR
 STRAIGHT FURNITURE CD
 BY MARC MASTERS

Juniko Hasegawa is a long-time member of Hikyoku, Japanese extreme noise project whose oeuvre stands firmly not to that of Meshuggah, Keiji Haino and Domo Yoshihiro in the annals of Far East noise. Dustbreeders are a French duo speckling in tape and turntable manipulations — their current instruments of choice are "magne-disques," that is, portable 7" record players attached to guitar amps. Dustbreeders met Juniko in Japan in 2002. *Mommy Close The Door* collects three French performances from later that year, chugging up 53 minutes of unending audio anarhodoxy that can roughly be described as *One Two* (noisoboy against an army of flaming charances).

Opening with Juniko's throat-shaking shrieks, "Live At The Black Room, Metz, November 9, 2002" slams the album into full spate. Tightly grating seiso ensues, with shards of vocal raking, distorted limp crowing and glave electronic scream emerging like fiery flames from a gasoline-drenched haystack. Bortekomagis is the closest relevant heat, but the group's wail of ear bullions is more random, with tickle nodes and drowsy jutting in and out of the din. "Live At La Motte, Lille, November 8, 2002" sees Juniko's pointed beat during the trio's identifiable squalls. But things soon quickly to unadulterated sonic biffing along the highest frequencies.

None of the preceding assault matches the closing "Live At Le Jardin Mademoiselle, Rennes, November 16, 2002," a tangent of scabbingly dissonance that sounds any speakers attempting to represent it. Juniko's frightening vocal torture is impressive, but the puzzle here is how The Dustbreeders can wrestle such infantilism sound out of manmade records. Regardless, the

listeners present are so inspired by this air-stretching proceedings that the cheers ending this album take on an appropriately distorted sheen.

MONGEZI FEZA/
FERRET ROSENGREN QUARTET
 FREE JAM
 ALEXIS CD
 BY BARRY WITHERSEND

Mongezi Feza was a small figure who left a huge gap in the scene. At his gigs what you saw was what you heard — small, wry, agile, darting, jumps, intense, cheeks pumping, eyes snapping, open and occasionally threatening to pop out, one leg leaving the ground, the arched pelvis extremely anchoring it round the earth-bound companion limb, the upper torso suddenly pivoting off the perpendicular. You could easily imagine the sound from the vision — fierce, crackling spottings of notes, simple motifs whipped and honed into cascading, complex structures, an almost insect-like lyricism and an incisive, knowing, ginkgo-eyed line throughout the legions.

This album is drawn from three sessions in Stockholm by The Rosengren Quartet with Feza and percussionist Ohay Temiz (guiting). During November and December 1992, several tracks have been extracted from longer performances. The result of hearing these curated pieces is positive, leaving you wanting more. Even though the first three tracks on disc two are from the same session as those on disc one, someone has improved the balance. Feza is heard to better advantage and the kit drums are better integrated.

Of all the herbs served at the feasts of free jazz and New Thing/Fire Music, the one least likely to draw blood was the contention that they couldn't play their instruments. It was musicality that was more often in question, and things could be better when the improvisers seemed less confident of their chops — if you don't have the option of concealing the waterboarding episodes with loads of sonically credible articulation maybe real creative thought has to go into those naked moments. While this is much to enjoy on "Theme Of The Day 1," there were times during the 38 minute opener when I wished for less dazeinism, and waves of gulf assured me far fewer pleasures when the group slipped into tempo to play a pop tune called "Sambation" six minutes from the end.

The longer, freer tracks rarely achieve the sense of direction and purpose of intermissions like *Free Jazz*, *Machine Gun* or *Asrossover*, while the less densely textured, less frenetic cuts on disc two are far more satisfying. For one thing, you can better enjoy the contributions of the individual players. There are impressive solos from Rosengren, and you get to hear more of the range of Feza's playing. Given how poorly represented he is at the moment, that is very welcome.

JEFF FUCCILLO
DISTURBED STRINGS
 ROADMORIO LP
 BY EDWIN POUNCEY

This record documents the strange and somewhat strained bond alliance between guitarists Jeff Fuccillo and the late John Fahey after coming together in the Spring of 1998 at a

small rock club in Portland, Oregon where Fuccillo was the opening act for Fahey's tour. Fahey congratulated him on his performance and, much to Fuccillo's delight and surprise, suggested they should record an album for his label.

The session took place that April with Fuccillo playing various acoustic instruments in one room, while Fahey sat behind the control panel dictating a selection of sound samples over the music. "I'm not sure if his intention was to show, direct, or distract my playing," posits Fuccillo in his sleeve-note. "Maybe a little of all three." Whatever Fahey's intention, the end result has more to do with his erratic creative personality than Fuccillo's guitar improvisations, which his mentor later declared as being "too nice" and unfeasible in their present form. Six years later, however, in the wake of Fahey's death, the time has finally come to hear just what actually took place between the two guitarists.

One can sympathise with Fuccillo for thinking that he was the victim of one of Fahey's curmudgeonly mood swings, still, in his playing here one can also fear why the creative partnership founders so easily. What Fahey was undoubtedly hoping to have was an extended bout of relentless guitar sailing, rather than a muted echo of his own years being played back to him. To be fair, Fuccillo occasionally meanders adventurously into tangle-stringed Eugene Chadbourne territory as well as the more tested American Primitive stable, but obviously not deeply enough to convince Fahey that he was kicking down any barns.

Fahey's sampled assaults on Fuccillo's playing are less intrusive than the sleeve-note makes out, but when they do occur there is a genuine sense of communication (and judging correctness). Between polished and primitive. Randomly skipping through a pile of assorted thrift-store records and crude electronic effects, Fahey's erratic contributions add a much needed sense of atmosphere and a twist of humour to the session.

NICK GREY &
THE RANDOM ORCHESTRA
 REGAL DAYLIGHT
 SENSITIVE CD
 BY JULIAN COWLEY

Regal Daylight comes cloaked in legends of Romanian and Armenian poets, with the Romanian tenor Vasile Moldoveanu apparently coming out of retirement to lend his operatic tones to the project. The debut lyrics of Nick Grey's 13 song concert references to *Democritus*, Newton, Cendrillon, Moses and Somerset Maugham. "Obidian" (Moses), we are told, was inspired by William Blake's poetical sketch *Gran, King Of Norway*. There is a "Song For Wynt" with stanzas that suggest Sir Thomas, the 16th century poet, rather than Robert. There's an injunction not to play the road on Sunday. Its cast includes an electric guitar called Chuck Trill, Shamus Dona on clarinet and a pianist Jasmine Pankrat. While Fuccillo contributes trumpet and "Latino sea appeal," the whole affair has the savour of an eccentric and highly manic fantasia.

Grey deploys laptop, sampler and electronics. He's also the main singer, embedding the limitations of his voice with trappings of meody earnestness. But it's his saxes, calculatingly



I am the law: Ostad Elahi

OSTAD ELAHI**THE CELESTIAL MUSIC OF OSTAD ELAHI**

LE CHANT DU MONDE CO

THE PATHS OF DIVINE LOVE

LE CHANT DU MONDE CO

DIALOGUE WITH THE BELOVED

LE CHANT DU MONDE CO

CELESTIAL HARMONIES

LE CHANT DU MONDE CO

MYSTICAL ORISON

LE CHANT DU MONDE CO

CASCADE

LE CHANT DU MONDE CO

"During the 12 years of ascetic practices in my youth, I would take up my tanbour every night and play sacred music," said Ostad Elahi. "We're were lifted... Sometimes I would find the room flooded with sunlight and then realise that I had spent the entire night playing the tanbour and singing."

Ostad Elahi is a fascinating figure, a unique 20th century musical giant. His whole adult life he worked as a magistrate in Iran, yet he was acclaimed as a musician embedded in a tradition of Islamic mysticism stretching back to the tenth century. Even after retiring aged 62, in order to devote himself full time to music and spiritual research, he never performed a concert either in public or for the radio. Yet at the end of his life his reputation in Iran was so great that Westerners such as Maurice Béjart and Yehudi Menuhin were drawn to visit him. Menuhin later wrote: "This marvellous musician was able to maintain a tension and concentration that I never imagined possible in the limited interval of a fourth or a fifth. It was very sensitive, very intense music, but also very precise and pure. I almost couldn't believe what I was hearing. It was a refined power, like some sort of laser."

Elahi's instrument of choice was the humble Kurdish tanbour, a long-necked lute associated more with the epic ballads of central Asian nomads than the sophisticated delights of Persian classical music. In fact, Elahi doesn't play Persian classical in the

strict sense, though that is one of the many traditions he studied. He is a prime example of a musician stepping out of the tradition, drawing on Persian, Azeri, pre-Islamic musics, even Kurdish popular tunes, stretching all forms to his own visionary purpose. The tanbour would have been popular in the Kurdish north western corner of Iran where Elahi grew up. As a magistrate on the move across the country he encountered the same instrument in Khorasan, in Iran's north east, and again across the border in Turkmenistan. Elahi was a musical emigre, mastering tanbour, setar and violin, but always returning to his beloved tanbour – having beaded up the lute's range and volume by adding extra strings, he then just sat and played, either to himself or a small circle of relatives and friends.

Between 1968 and 1972, when Elahi was in his early 70s, someone finally got a microphone in front of him. These are no-nonsense, no-effects, mono recordings, and occasionally they sound like the teapot split on the tapes. But Elahi's earthy mysticism comes shining through, a celestial quest for the divine via the physical propulsion of playing, and then more playing. In David Toop's new book, Haunted Weather, guitarist Derek Bailey recalls the "playing fools" of early jazz, men who could not stop playing without out-side help. Then there's Theodore Levin's remarkable book about Central Asian music, *The Hundred Thousand Voices Of God*, named for the dervishes, ascetics and outcasts who regard musicianship as a form of service, "assuming the moral weight of guiding humankind toward the just and the good". Ostad Elahi fits in here, alongside The Velvet Underground's "White Light/White Heat", another hard-strummed drive towards the ecstatic state, recorded at around the same time.

Elahi's recordings have excited interest beyond the usual World Music constituency. An USA based company called Advanced Brain Technologies recommend listening to Elahi to give your auditory system a great workout – a gym for your brain, if you like. ABT's pilot studies confirm that "listening to

Clive Bell gives his brain a workout with the devotional music of an Iranian tanbour master

bringing improvements in various cognitive and auditory domains". To this end they have filtered the recordings and added binaural and other natural sounds specially recorded in Tehran. Le Chant Du Monde's six albums on the other hand just offer the original music, cleaned up a little.

All these CDs of Elahi's solo playing have moments of delicacy (though Elahi's touch is never less than robust), singing of ancient prayers, and astonishing passages of string-snapping frenzy. Rhythms shift smoothly from seven-time to ten, to eight, as Elahi draws on material picked up in different corners of Iran – a travelling magistrate with a voracious ear.

The Celestial Music Of Ostad Elahi is a good place to start. The opening "Jelo Shahi Sute" is 32 minutes of playing over the same drone, but Elahi shifts the tonal centre from mode to mode, so we feel the music is modulating naturally. Likewise his rhythmic sense is far from rigid. As his left hand flutters like a dragonfly in endless ornamentation, Elahi conducts the listener through melodic gear changes. This is spacious, large scale solo music, but never feels lost or meandering. Two thirds through, Elahi, by now immersed in an ocean of ornaments and riffs, chants the various names of God and the seven archangels. Later, the 18 minute "Sahar Sute", played at dawn to summon the dervishes to prayer, is great improvisation, showcasing the odd harmonic clashes that add surprise to Elahi's always individual style. The piece moves through a series of clamours in which the sheer joy of Elahi's seemingly endless playing communicates strongly.

Mystical Orison is Elahi's homage to the saints of western Iran. This includes "Baba Fou", a poem recalling the days when the price of attaining enlightenment could be death, as happened to one Mansur Hallaj in 922. In a moment of ecstasy he declared, "I am the Truth." In a voice on the verge of sobbing, Elahi sings of his own commitment to the hard path of divine love: "If, like Mansur, they should hang me on the gallows, I shall not renounce my Friend, no, I shall not renounce."

sensitive set rock arrangements that catch the ear, each melody carefully stage set and it. His cryptically assembled words are suspended within translucent layers of mixed instrumental sound, electronic chicanerie and floating atmospheric wool fragments. The 11 trades it together like complementary scenes that cumulatively thicken the mystery. The set's subtleties remain elusive and, maybe because of that, consistency of stating is sketchily achieved in a series of successfully smoldering gestures.

BRENT GUTZEIT DRUG MONEY

KRAVNY CD

BY KEITH MOLINE

Chicago lugubrius musician, Boxmedia label boss and TV Pow member Gutzeit has been creating interesting short-run CD's of his diverse output for some time, but this Kravny release should bring his work to a wider audience. It features some of the slowest music imaginable, dronescapes that evolve so gradually that uncommitted listeners may find themselves losing interest, concentration, perhaps the will to live. But with it and *Drug Money* reveals itself to be a strong, almost hallucinatory statement in the tradition of Daniel Merriweather.

Using the processed sounds of electric gadgets on piano strings, the opening piano "Piano Motor Skills #2" is the most sonically engaging of its four long tracks. It piles up a variety of metallic textures and overtones, suggesting the clang explorations of Thomas Rieper if his instruments were fashioned from the unknown alloys of distant planets. The following pair of tracks showcases Gutzeit at his most derring. Both "Riding Horses" and "400 Blows" click in at over 20 minutes apiece, but pose new realms of uneventfulness — a conundrum in case you were wondering. While both pieces are extremely minimal in their almost total absence of development, they span a massive and complex chain of sound. Gutzeit favours a disquieting sub-bass throb that could loosen fillings at high volume, but the overall atmosphere created is strongly womb, meditative and enveloping. Nothing much happens, but it doesn't happen well.

The polar extremes of electronics are further apart than ever. On the one hand the Righty spasmades of the glitchologists are reaching new apogees of mania, while on the other the brooding atmospheres of the dronescapes are approaching absolute zero. *Drug Money* just lowered the temperature a little further.

CM VON HAUSWOLFF THREE OVERPOPULATED CITIES...

SUB ROSA CD

BY JIM HAYNES

Carl Michael von Hausswolff's Three Overpopulated Cities Built By Short-Sighted Planners: An Unbalanced And Quite Dangerous Airport And An Abandoned Church — to give it a full title — is the second in a trilogy that began with *A Lecture On Deurbuurtschap In Architecture*, making inquiries into the psychic and emotional impact that architecture has upon the greater populace. Obviously unconcerned with numerical accuracies for the title, Hausswolff has picked Lajpa, Mexico City, Tokyo, Chicago and Bangkok

as the demographic pool from which to collect his raw information, in the form of barely processed recordings of electrical field disturbances. Electricity and the power grid have long been central elements within Hausswolff's body of work. In a number of installations from the mid-90s, he incorporated its physical presence as howled electric felines running through pristine white box galleries. More recently on *Overpopulated Cities* (overcommodification), he adapted the belief of Electromagnetic Voice Phenomena researchers Raymond Cass and Feidrich Jürgensen that certain frequencies within the electromagnetic spectrum could make communication with the dead possible. For these Overpopulated Cities, Hausswolff extends his ideas about electricity as an allogorical tale with political implications, claiming the electrical fields within these communities has been transformed as something of a pollutant and a toxin.

Very few of these ideas are set-evident within the actual recordings, which continue his very formalist pursuits for a communicative sound with no unnecessary ornamentation. Armed with wiretapping microphones and a couple of cheap walkie-talkies, Hausswolff documents the electrical fields from these locations as deadened hums occasionally interrupted by minuscule bleeps and white static. Adds from the dithered noise of walkie-talkie feedback on "Medico City And Tokyo", the album is clinically devoid of actuality. In its unwavering monotone, Hausswolff's reveals the conceptual strategies of Joseph Beuys, who turned his deconstructions about language and semantics with a calculated simplicity. Thus, the aesthetic composition of Three Overpopulated Cities may be irrelevant to Hausswolff's ultimate goal of asking the right question that could change the course of human events.

LARS HORNTVETH POOKA

SMALLTOWN SUPERLOUD CD

BY JOHN MUDDY

It would be nice to believe that the Norwegian big band Jagt Jazst operates as a kind of sprawling and uglydemocracy and that their rousing fusions of jazz, electronica and post-rock emerge organically from the confluence of all ten regular members. The debut solo album from Jagt's Lars Hornsveth, however, suggests the reality is less idealistic.

Pooka is driven by an identical approach to melody and arrangement — if once stately and playful — as much of Jagt Jazst's work. 23 year old Hornsveth is clearly a key compositional force in the group, and so the bulk of Pooka sounds pretty much like their music played by a reconfigured ensemble. In place of Jagt's massed horns, Hornsveth deploys a nine-piece string section, and where their rhythmic foundation is built on the exuberant powerhouse drumming of Hornsveth's brother Martin, here the beats are exclusively electronic — a patchwork of flutter and snarsh reminiscent of Kim Hjelm (who contributes the CD's typically gorgeous sleeve art) or Four Tet's *Neon Genesis*.

Hornsveth's delicate orchestrations mark him out as a disciple of Gil Evans as much as Rönnest. While the strings are lean and swift, he soles underdramatically in the foreground, fitting between clarinet (predominantly), acoustic guitar

and saxophone, but never disrupting his own grand structures. As a result, some may find Pooka a little too tidy for comfort. Only a jolting edited guitar riff and some tougher beats on "Lesen In Vielen" disrupt the warm, equally atmospheric providing the album. Meticulous and highly engaging stuff, nevertheless, and a fine diversion until the next Jagt Jazst disc proper — set to be produced by Phrasen's Marcus Schmidbauer — arrives next year.

PERCY HOWARD'S MERIDIEM A PLEASANT FICTION

JOHANNES ANGEL CD

BY MIKE BARNES

Former Nils, vocalist, writer and producer Percy Howard first formulated Meridiem in 1998 as a floating collective under his direction, which would operate along the lines of Anton Fier's Golden Palominos. He has assembled an impressive cast of 23 musicians here, including bassist Bill Laswell, Charles Hayward on drums, guitarists Buckethead and Vernon Reid, and vocalist Jadas, formerly of Swans. The music is intentionally minimalist but once inside the first song "The Girl On The Back Of A Motorcycle", one wonders if this might be a towering folly. Jadas gives it snarly, heavy-lidded performance, based on Kali Laven's poem *The Incessuous Trinity*, before masses guitars and Howards' big rock yowl come in on each chorus. But although his vocals weigh on the harmonic, they prove to be perfectly capable in evoking an obsession straining the edge of the action. The track finally rises on a swelling wave of guitars and strings, and the drums shift into double time towards the fade.

After that epic statement comes "Meling", a breathstirring melody beautifully sung by Heggy Rhodes accompanied by delicate, spangly guitar and off-haz noise. It shows Howard's expertise of mixing up the broad brushstrokes with the finer details in his music. On "Tim Buckley's 'Chase The Blues Away'", he reconfigures the melody and imbues the song with more of an edge than the hushed reiteration of the original. Typically, his production gives us a sonic panorama that stretches way into the distance. Jadas returns on "Carroll", her theatrical vocals perfectly suited to the melody and mode, turning electron mid-phase in a dialogue of sorts with sopranoist Jonathan Byrd. "The East" is based on an improvisation featuring Hayward, Laswell, Reid, Buckethead and third guitarist Haroon Serang, and finds Howard considering and contrasting the two very rock/edgier stylings of a more overt instrumental firework. On songs like this Howard's music is strikingly original, in that he never completely pitches in with either camp but concentrates instead on pursuing his own vision.

JASON KAHN MIRAMAR

5498 CD

JASON KAHN & JON MUELLER PAPERCUTS

CIRCUIT CD

BY DAN WATKINSON

"I began to understand why Indian music has roots for different times of the day and seasons of the year," writes Zurich based American percussionist and electronician Jason Kahn of



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Endless

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his residence in Studio Medi in the French Pyrenees. A huge glass door allows natural light to flood Bob Knecht's converted barn, whose high ceilinged acoustics helped shape the five tracks of *Miramar* to such an extent that "soin" is credited on the album along with Knecht's analogue synthesizer and percussor. As its title suggests, *Miramar* is an audio version of gazing out at the ocean, hearing light reflect from the waves and imagining sound currents and general undulation of ebb and flow. Knecht's superimposed layers of synthesizer tones and distant chiming percussion shift in and out of focus with the slightest movement on the part of the listener, revealing not only his work with Testaruru Nakamura but the time-defying perfection of Eliane Radigue. And when Knecht's album can proudly stand.

While *Miramar*'s rich drones from the aesthetics of listening space, the nuances of *Percups*, a collaboration with Milwaukee's percussionist and composer Jon Mueller for his Croton Imprint, are best appreciated through headphones, Mueller has in the past based his compositions in sources as diverse as bicycles, boilers and boards, but for the work with Knecht exchanged short compositions based on the sounds of paper (the album title also puts on the name of Knecht's Cutupm), which were reworked and extended before Knecht compiled the final 18 minute mix. Knecht and Mueller were determined "not to leave the original source of the concept — paper — behind in a sea of digital sound processing." Instead they used the computer to enhance the inherent properties of the material by steering background and foreground, bringing very quiet sounds forward and placing leader sheeting and crumpling sounds further back in the mix.

GIYA KANCHELI DIPLOPITO ECM NEW SERIES CO BY RYAN MARLEY

Since 1991, the year in which Giya Kancheli migrated from Georgia to the West, his music has received considerable exposure in concert halls and on CD. *Diplopito* is the seventh set of compositions to be issued by ECM — a major commitment to Kancheli's music on the part of the Stuttgart Kammerorchester are conducted by Deems Russell Davies, with whom in recent years Kancheli has established a strong working relationship, and the soloists who contribute to the title track are countertenor Derek Lee Ragin and cellist Thomas Demenga.

Horos Rosten (1996) and *Diplopito* (1997), the two lengthy pieces comprising this hour set, sound, in common with most Kancheli compositions, like the work of a reluctant modernist. Shrewdly he employs certain technical innovations that originated with the avant garde, and he's unquestionably a man of our time, but his music is lockdown looking, influenced more by Prokofiev and Shostakovich than the work of his contemporaries. *Nostalgia* always comes with a whiff of embalming fluid, and its ten note diatonic line here. Kancheli yearns for what is denied him — a more straightforwardly "classical" idiom and for something altogether more elusive: the ineffable. Actually, yearning, his principal mode of

expression, permeates every aspect of the music, to the exclusion of most other moods. Its consistency might be the whole point. "When a person goes into a church, synagogue or mosque," says Kancheli, "when there's no service going on, there's a special kind of silence. I want to turn that silence into music." While Boston, for piano and strings, is either Kancheli's apology to his wife for never having danced with her or an apology, its co-ideologue is Russell Davies, who plays the piano part, and he and the strings get the most out of the material. Although Kancheli makes evocative references to the waltz, and there are dramatic eruptions and wavy interludes, he doesn't sufficiently vary the pace of the music, and its end plod soon becomes tedious. Even less varied but somewhat more appealing is *Diplopito*, in which the rôle allotted to Derek Lee Ragin is like his bleached counterpart, with its limited expressive range, has an ethereal quality that Kancheli uses sparingly and very effectively. The words Ragin sings are, as Kancheli explains, "meanings from a Georgian epic," and the composition is prefaced with a question from Joseph Brodsky: "My work of silence, my mute creation." Meaning is dense and expressiveness arestless, but that's left a atmosphere. But atmosphere, however superbly evoked, isn't sufficient to make *Diplopito* and *Horos Rosten* anything more than a curiosity, and Kancheli often the listener little more in his booklet note, *Horos Rosten*. Jaghargishvili describes the composer "meowing sonoritatively like through the cities and throns of the West." It's an uncomfortably apt description of the music, too.

MIKE LADD NOSTALGIALATOR SPLIT-NOT CO BY DEREK WALKERSLEY

Mike Ladd's career as singer, producer and DJ/producer has thus far seen him advance the rap canon while crafting it as well, devil's advocate and hometown rolled into one. Ladd is a myth maker, producing sub-EU concept albums under his own name, an imaginary friend between his own Melancholies and Majestoes, and numerous guinea guest appearances. He outflanks this most self-important of genres with imagined epiphanies, off the cuff propaganda and misinformation. *Nostalgialator* now marks a new angle of attack — a posh album, idly switching genres like chanted surfing through alternative metal. Rapping is just a part of the palette, much as Prince would occasionally give the mic on his albums to provide a brief physical impetus. And, as ever, tying just beneath the shiny surface is the critique.

Twisted samplelike subversion is present from the outset, with opener "One States Play Nostalgia," padding false crowd noise and bollust, organic guitar samples atop new P-Funk jazzeats. "Trouble Shot" is a knowing synthesis of brass and guitar stabs with distorted vocals, like Bonito The Bass fronted by Mark Stewart. "Housewives At Play" is a Boobly Conn-style disco vogueran, equal parts sexual obsession and self-doubt, the snarph midnight cruise of the music infected by quixotic synth invasions. The idea posited by the album is that of a soft-future enlivened by the cheap thrills of the *Nostalgialator*, a dream machine that assuages future shock with pleasant experiences of more

comfortable times. Ladd's lyrics, whether sung or rapped, repeat a series of cheap thrills and cheaper sex — it's as if he's plugged himself straight into the data output machine itself. The scenarios the album feeds off are as dry, empty and sterile as the debased nostalgic memories that are the theme of Dennis Potter's drama *Cloud Atlas*.

And the disparaging social commentaries, the only factor missing is the central figure of Ladd himself, changing roles too quickly to get a fix on. In the end it's suggested that moving to Mars might be the only way out of the mess created by modern man — an empty solution that begs the question as to the substance of Ladd's subversion. Yet for all that, *Nostalgialator* is exalting, exhorting, rhetorical fury in favour of a satirical masquerade ball of capitalist occasions.

THE MEMORY BAND THE MEMORY BAND

HUNGRY HILL CO
BY MARK BARNES

With its casual drums and gently piping brass, the opening "Theme For The Memory Band" sounds like one of the community singalongs at Future Pilot, *Alcatraz* Salute Your Boots, while also nodding towards the more bucolic sound of a village band surging up. It sets the tone for the group's debut, which incorporates tracks from their EPs together with new material. If Kieran Hebden's music as *Fool's Err* has been given the rather unfortunate label folksinger, at least he isn't alone, not least because his friends and fellow group members in Fridge, bassist Adam Ihan and drummer Mark Adams, appear here. *Memory Band* writer Stephen Gordoni also records under the electronics pseudonym Gordon and through his largely acoustic group are more folk than folksinger, they do incorporate subtle digital elements.

A song about wassailing, "Calling De", employs snap-on beats and distant tom-toms, while Cradock's guitar evokes the flowing lines of Nick Drake and early John Martyn. Structurally simple, it's lifted by a gorgeous vocal incantation towards the close. "Out Of Town", meanwhile, grooves along with what could well be programmed Morris Dancing bell-pale — take that, Steeleye Span.

Based on the same traditional tune as Richard Thompson's "Tarezell Farewell" and fashioned from a spacious web of piano, synths, violin and guitar, the wortless number babbles "Fairy Admirer" is particularly haunting. Arthur Russell's "This Is How We Walk On The Moon" slips in seamlessly, its vocal harmonies augmented by skittering percussive strings and fiddle guitar pickings. The subtly disorienting effect of this music is exemplified by "Once Bitten", in keeping with its clinkly title, what sound like gritched and looped synthetic sounds turn out to be simply a recording of a bitten.

MERBOW LAST OF ANALOG SESSIONS

IMPORTANT RECORDS

BY KEITH MOLINE

It takes a special breed of artist who is unafraid to cover up their flaws from their equipment, to reach out from hesitation or notions of taste, and create the conditions for their instrument to howl and bleed. Jimi Hendrix is the

obvious example, the young Pharoah Sanders another. One could cite guitarists like Pita Kets Levene and AR Kane's Alex and Rudi, who stood gleefully as their instruments showered metaphysical sparks. Or Einstürzende Neubauten, who dispensed with metaphor and used their machines to produce the real thing. Surely the time has come to place Masami Akita in this tradition, rather than continue to present him as some invigilating angel of carnage, a sadistic flesh hellion on torturing the listener into cowering, wed submissiveness.

Contrapuntal, the first of three CDs comprising this collection of work recorded on analogue equipment, is massively compressed Technique, as distorted that the pulse all but dissolves, with the music's various submerged layers having to fight to break the blotted surface for air. The second CD, *Adrenalin*, is wilder still, a sensory assault of fuzz and feedback that although mostly beatless, gathers an astonishing momentum. At times the sound takes on a taunting, feral personality of its own, as it constantly contests itself into newer and more harrowing shapes. At one point the noise even folds itself into language, or whose resonance to being appreciated one can't help but feel some relief. On the final CD, the track *Space*, Springfield, Akita deploys more complex tones and loops, but distorts these to a sickeningly barking scat and forces them to do battle – a Spielbergian war of extreme tonalities.

This thrilling collection is a fine place to start considering Masihaw as a musician rather than just a cipher employed by noise theorists alongside Adams, Barthes and Deleuze. Certainly he makes the perfect sound to test our notions of just what exactly 'sound' can be. But on the evidence of *Last Of Analog Sessions*, there's plenty more to Akita than being a mere sighter of some vague notion of cultural extremity.

MOUTHUS

MOUTHUS

PSYCHO-FATH CD

BY MARC MARTINS

Noise can be tough to judge objectively, but as with any genre, its extremes are obvious. Lifeless reiterations are easy to spot, and foamy down-trod introdrom paths as equally dead, breaching reminders of the lifelessness of sound. Mouthus belongs in the latter category. The self-titled debut by the Brooklyn duo is a bottomless well of crashing jets, roaring accelerations and rumbling cacophony. Drawing equally on the guitar genius of Radheesh Grey's Blue Harmonia, the ragged loops of the Dead C, the overexerted of Sightings, and the pulsing invention of free jazz, Brian Wilson and Nata Nata have forged a thick, gurgling soup of excessive sounds. Some parts even resemble trash rock droppings like Pusy Galore and The Jesus Lizard, but Mouthus have dragged that primitive noise up a new mounds of density and texture.

The method of Mouthus is basic: Each track farms mechanical rhythms out of repeated basses, accented by sprawling percussions, warping guitar loops and undantable sounds placed at varying locales within the undulating mix. Yet the array of correlations feels infinite. The cavernous "Cirrus One" starts from muffled howling to a redacted din, while "Head Of Shifting" is truly sonic like a blurry leap from a slasher flick. "Great To Spot The Seal" ends things

in a frantic tag, smearing distorted babbling over distorted guitar jingles worthy of Zoot Horn Rollo. Thrashout, Saliyan and Nelson construct a rhythm that's both regular and random. The creaky sounds that prince speakers of regular intervals feel like a snafu, yet the jolting expressiveness remains unpredictable, the expected heaves that still shock upon arrival.

The duo clearly have more to say – a forthcoming LP on Thundax Music's Ecstatic Peace is one of 2004's more thrilling prospects – but Mouthus have enough wordless verbiage to fill all the empty heads that could use it.

CONLON NANCARROW STUDIES AND SOLOS

WERCO CD

BY BRIAN MORRISON

Necessity may be the mother of invention, but what's its dad? It's often stated – and hinted at here – that Conlon Nancarrow gave up writing for conventional instrumentation to write for player pianos because he couldn't get adequate performances of his work in the USA. Thereafter, in Mexican exile, he had no alternative. And then there's the argument that says Nancarrow was looking for modes of articulation that went beyond human virtuosity, both in terms of actual attack but also as a way of leaving out the implicit virtuosism of a "virtuous" performance.

Neither version is quite right though both contain strong elements of truth. Nancarrow didn't absolutely give up writing for human performers and for other instruments, and neither is his work utterly sui generis. The most obvious influence, certainly from listening fresh to these lovely piano duo transcriptions played and mostly made by Helena Bugalé and Amy Williams, is Stevensons' *Neoclassicism*. It's there in the beautifully weighted asymmetrical phrases and in the unclutteredness of the structures.

The pioneering transcriber of Nancarrow's player piano pieces for human performance was the late Yvar Mikhashoff, and it was the discovery of an unpublished MS of Study #15 that led Bugalé and Williams, with the help of composer Eric One, to start the investigations that led to this album. They also include Mikhashoff's lovely version of *Sorceress* from around 1945, the first score the composer wrote on punched paper rolls, and (sighs? written for York's International Tango Collection in 1964, the year of Nancarrow's belated public breakthrough, and the first work for a human player after 40 years of mechanical reproduction).

The other late work is 1980's *Three Canons* for Ursula but the really interesting stuff is earlier: a *Private and Blues* from 1935, the composer's first published piece; the three tiny *Two Part Studies* from the early 1940s, and from the 1950s *11 Studies For Player Piano*, from the sequence of 50 such pieces, numbered but unitled, in which Nancarrow constantly hints at Bach as well as Stevinky.

Wiley Bugalé and Williams have not attempted to imitate the specific attack and sonority of Nancarrow's machines, which were modified with metal and leather to give a very sharp attack with a soft resonance and rapid decay. These performances are much more conventionally pianistic, which perhaps makes them more immediately listenable and in doing so opens up their complex language. They reveal

Nancarrow not as some idiosyncratic Rule-Goldeberg of modern music, an exiled refugee who sold only perverse homage to the canonical instrument of Western classical music, but rather as a formidable technician working within the canons of that great but depleted tradition.

THE NECKS THE BOYS OST

REPRISE RECORDS CD

BY LOUISE GRAY

Originally released in 1998 on Wild Sound, this soundtrack album from Rowan Woods's film is that rarity, an OST that stands on its own merits. This isn't that surprising when you consider it's from The Necks, the Australian trio who seem to have spent the last 25 years doing things with a piano, bass and drum kit that no other group has really approached.

From the sprightly opening of the Boys theme – a ringing motif of piano notes, educed by a drum and with some electronic screeches scything away in the background – you're in unidentified territory, America? Jazz? Or, for that matter, a bit of the John Adams School of musical minimalism? Whatever, it conjures up the badlands of Australia where the film – an Antipodean *Gaspar* – is set. The sonic evocation of place is as well done that one almost sees the screen doors of dingy houses banging in the wind, the wastelands yawning into the outback.

The group achieve this with an elastic take on their theme material. Pianist Chris Abrahams establishes a slow, lanky building theme, and Tony Books muffed drums and stoked cymbals skirt around a suppressed violence. Lloyd Swanton's bass gives an architecture to the album which, while divided into seven tracks, always sounds very much as a whole. That becomes apparent in the third development of the film's theme. Suddenly the bass is swinging with a dangerous presence, the solo closing in on themselves, and Abrahams is pounding harsh electronics that have been burning in the background more fervently. It's brilliant in its execution and shocking in its effect.

JIM O'ROURKE

TWO ORGANS

THREE POPLARS LP

BY JIM HAYNES

Jim O'Rourke's ubiquitous presence continues to loom unabated across the musical landscape. His recognizable fingerprints have smudged the boundaries between avant-garde practice and the multifaceted stylistic subversives of pop music; with the most recent 2004 appearance being the Sonic Youth album *Sonic Nurse* and his production of *Wilco's A Ghost Is Born*. Yet, it has been more than two years since O'Rourke has released any new solo material. The publication of his *Two Organs* record doesn't really count, as it is an archival recording that dates back to 1991. In his interview with David Koenan in *The Wire* 213, O'Rourke had mentioned that Organman's David Jockman was interested in putting out some material that O'Rourke had been working on while at Guelph University through Christoph Heemann's Dom label. While that never materialized back then, it has been published now by Three Poplars, the imprint responsible for the art editions from Heemann's elemental drone ensemble Minus.

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Back in the early '90s, O'Rourke had often been referenced as the guitarist from *Illusion Of Safety*, implying that his solo work would wield a similar metaphysical hammer and bratist psychology as his fellow post-industrialists. Obviously, this assumption proved to be wildly incorrect. In retrospect, very little of his earliest work, including the solo guitar duos *Wartunes of Zenopus* and the brilliant neoclassic *Consort of Sound*, had anything in common with *Illusion Of Safety*. Two Organs further this distance as an immediate presentation of the formalist pursuits of high minimalism. This composition ripples with the phasic patterns of sustained organ tones softly bleeding against each other over an extended period of time. Phil Black's flute composition and Terry Riley's *Imaginary Accents* are obvious citations for O'Rourke, who even at this young age had such a keen ear as to render the simplicity of minimalism with a precision and a delicacy that is rarely heard even from the masters of that genre. Every once in a while, Jim O'Rourke will provide the evidence as to why he still commands such a huge cultist cachet, and *Two Organs* is a prime example of his craftsmanship.

OCs

2

NARHACK CD

BY MARC MASTERS

OCs is the solo acoustic guitar project of John Dwyer, formerly of noise attack duo PINK AND BROWN and currently of The Coachwheels, a ragtag San Francisco duo who oft early blues through overdriven amps and mazed-out recording equipment. Given the aggression of Dwyer's other pursuits, the muffled, far-off quality of 2 is a departure, and while some tracks feel like sketchy doodles, the majority are full of sharp ideas developed in an intoxicating distance.

2 mostly features low, amplified Fehay picking, accompanied by sparse riffs and the occasional whispered vocal, all bunned beneath layers of muddled reverb and thick tape hiss. That surface noise is both an instrument and an atmosphere, creating an enigmatic atmosphere that recalls the tortured missives of Daniel Johnston and the harrowing loneliness of Jandek. Dwyer is equally adept at primitive-folk semi-songs and cloudy tonal abstractions. "I Would Draw In Regret" sounds like a traditional Southern hymn phrased in a goyardeen, while "GOB C" is all echo and decay, the original stink plucks that created it seeming to have

occurred decades ago. The best tracks, however, throw all of Dwyer's tags — noise, delicacy, distance and melody — onto one catchily titled "Left Me Dry" combines sunless Jandekian song-bashing with a catchily chorus that shocks the song's chaos into silent while "Beng Sold, For Rent" loops its warped banjo line like a stuttering brain struggling to come untrapped. 2 gets even eerier as it goes along, with scratchy violins and zombified vocals worming their way inside the album's thick skin. The final track, a tape of a child retelling a Goldilocks story, replaces the album's blurry mix of enigmatic sound with too definite narrative. But by then, 2 has so enthralled that even literary can't ruin its mystery.

ORGANUM
VACANT LIGHTS/RARA AVIS
DEBUT RECORD

BY JIM HAYNES

"With my work, the programme for each release is exactly the length that it needs to be," explains David Juckerman from a 1993 interview originally for *Genius*. "So short or long isn't really an issue." For more than 20 years, Juckerman has amassed a huge catalogue of minuscule-edition releases for both his solo recordings and his ensemble *Organa*. These productions, which he at the furthest peripheries of public

consumption, have often instigated a very loyal constituency of *Organa*/*Organa* fans by the sheer paucity of material found on these recordings. Despite the implications that a double disc set might actually sprawl forward for more than two hours, *Organa's* *Vacant Light/Rara Avis* maintains the Juckerman/Organa protocol for brevity: Disc one clocks in just over 34 minutes, disc two a quiet 19 minutes. Of course, for Juckerman, time isn't really an issue.

Vacant Lights dates back to 1988 and boasts the claim that the recording took less than an hour to make, while the second took six months to put together. Unfortunately, only the back cover to Juckerman's abundant artwork is reprinted on this CD release. During that long haul, Juckerman asked Deneen Jane Rose, Steven Stipek and Peter McGivern to join him behind IPS Studios, where they all quietly drugged peepo glass bottles and chains over concrete surfaces. Juckerman occasionally injects his delicate shakuhachi to the muted clamor of these actions, effectively softening the industrial clang. The amount of savor throughout *Vacant Lights* is consistently low and occasionally

comes across as little more than a field recording. Nevertheless, its resigned calm holds a stoic elegance that renders the quiet *Organa* record one of the best.

Rara Avis collects five tracks from incalculable origins, one of which is the "Bobanica" single sides 7", with a pressing of mere 60 copies. For these pieces, *Organa* treads territory with the trademark doses measured from the acoustic interplay between glistening brasses, created from bowed cymbals, scraping metals and growing guitar tones. Had it not been for the before decision to release this as a double disc set, *Vacant Lights/Rara Avis* would be perfect.

PAN AMERICAN
QUIET CITY

KRANZY CD
BY DEREK WILLIAMS

Mark Nelson's recording career began ten years ago with *Labordord*, whose lonely, wondrous ambience sounded like Angels' Battlements comprising lo-fi symphonies adrift in a space capsule. As *Pan American* he has assembled a commanding universe of samples and loops tested microphones, but this fourth *PR* album comes full circle and reemphasizes the live instrumentation and vocals that gave *Labordord* their living, breathing personal quality. This, then, is the most complete Mark Nelson album thus far.

Even the lengthy instrumental here observe a trajectory of build and release (or inhalation and exhalation), giving this spacious Ambient music an episodic structure akin to songs or lullabies. Nelson's musical palette has always gravitated toward lonelier voices, with echoed lines on both electric and classical guitars played with the careful deliberation of writing a love letter. *Quiet City* has a stark melodic linearity that makes the similarly sonorous post-rock explorations of Silver Mount Zion or Godspeed You! Black Emperor feel hopelessly confused. On "Hail And Skylight", a mid-song pause is suddenly filled with a swelling brass ensemble akin to a worldless gospel choir — a moment of epic loneliness mixed with a deep empathy that, say, Spiritualized's grossly swollen emarginations lack the refinement to match. Comparing the "loosening in space" aesthetic of these two groups would be like comparing the enigmatic limbo of Tarkovsky's *Solaris* with the big "wow" factor of sci-fi blockbuster *Contagion*.

Moments of *Quiet City* recall Emilio Monacelli, Augustus Pablo, Pusser-era Pink Floyd, and, in its more intimate moments, the whispered

American angst of *The Four Carpet*. But simply listing references obscures the deeply personal syntheses that Mark Nelson achieves on *Quiet City*. Whereas *Labordord* evoked a hopeless solitude, Nelson finds resolution in *Quiet City*'s warmly melancholy guitar notes and beauty melodic. It's a mood that requires no prior knowledge nor specialized critical tools, yet achieves mood profundity as Mark Nelson's finest work since *Labordord* that emerged a decade or so ago. *Quiet City* is the consummate rendering of his atmospheric muse.

PASSAGE THE FORCEFIELD KIDS

ANTICON CD

BY MORG REEVES

Much of the music of Oakland, California's Anticon collective is driven by a need for cathartic self-expression. Passage's first solo album, *The Forcefield Kids*, is no different, but it is more than just a purely emotional release. For from atoping fellow Anticon member Soi's flying steed, Passage reveals real and perceived enemies. Passage is more of a social critic, skewing issues like America's criminalisation of youth on the track "Creature In The Classroom". Deliberately provocative song titles mask complex ideas: "The Unexpected Whiteboy Slave Song", for example, is an anti-nuclear rap that posits, "White boys don't get no slave song/So we invented radiation/Who else other than us Wheeler Bread bimbos would go out and build an H-bomb?"

Although *The Forcefield Kids* is intended as a satire of teen angst, not much of it is very funny, despite songs such as "Old Aunt Mary With Purple Feet"; that's because one can't make out the jokes Passage tells. The Anticon crew has always had a problem with elevation, and Passage's use of fast rap techniques frequently blurs his words. Even when he sings in a folk style on "Old Aunt Mary", his voice sounds so droopy and wavy that his lyrics often float away in the process.

Produced by Passage himself, *The Forcefield Kids* has a hazy, acidic and electronic surface that invites worthy comparisons to its title. The music actually sounds warm and human, yet protected by a sharp, biting wit. Some songs rely on the now classic Anticon formula of do-it-oneself samples over boom-bap tracks, others are harsh blasts of synthesizer noise. Cumulatively, it lives up to Public Image Ltd.'s standard for death disco.

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LEE PERRY

UPSETTERS 14 DUB
BLACKBOARD JUNGLE
AURALUX CD

BY STEVE BARKER

Imagine Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* or Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland* as originally issued in a limited edition and then only available intermittently over the years in inferior, more or bootleg versions. Well, that was the title congenited to the album many reggae bulls consider Lee "Scratch" Perry's most important contribution to reggae, if not his finest achievement. Although consisting of the title 14-dub album with Prince Buster's equally ill-served *The Message* and Cleo Chin's more accessible *Jesus Jive* Dub, the album that became known as *Blackboard Jungle* was in an altogether different league, as Scratch met King Tubby to toughen some of the Upsetter's already toughed rhythms.

Pressed in Jamaica as a precursor with a run of only 300 copies, of which 100 were brought to Britain to be snapped up by sound system operators, *Blackboard Jungle* remained unissued in the UK until now. In the absence of original master tapes, the sound is refreshingly remastered via analogue technology from the cleanest vinyl copy available, and it's ear-popping stuff. Signalling a great leap forward sonically, the opener is a fate and home version of "Buoy Blank". The rhythm that bedded the original chart is stretched, squeezed and blown apart in space, with echo, reverb and delay creating vast canyons of sound within the now hairy familiar framework of the muted tune. The trombone version of the same rhythm pulses back from the abyss and onto a jazzier plane. What follows bears a stylistic only that was neither typical of Tubby nor Scratch, although both went elements of the sonor re-thinking that threads through the mixes here. "Three Walkers" songs ("Dreamland", "Key" and "Keep On Moving"), Junior Byrd's reiteration plant "Please Call Ahon", The Huxxons' urgent "You Can Run" and a Dillinger voiced threat to Tubby on "Dub Organiser" are all treated to levels of mixing board manipulation and effects applications that, if not entirely new, certainly had not been used before in such combinations. Four bonus tracks are sourced from the later classic Black Art period of the mid- to late '70s, when Perry hit some and commercial milestones. This is a welcome, quirky addition to the now overblown Scratch canon — especially the new recruit to Upsetter Roy Gravesham, the regally funky "Upsetting Rhythm #2".

DER PLAN
DIE VERSCHWÖRUNG

MARIINA CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

24 years after first leaving the drawing board and 15 more list slapping out software, *Der Plan* V4.0 has arrived. Of course, competing and communication systems have changed a little since Der Plan's earliest days in Düsseldorf, but as too has the group's personnel. A detailed flowchart reprinted in the lavishly designed booklet accompanying this release pays tribute to members past and present. For the current version, the only surviving member of the original trio, Norbert Reipplig is joined by Künzler from master disco outfit Dschirri and Fuzzy Love's Lutz. The result is a tougher, harder-edged, less harmonious take on Der Plan's sprightly disco-soulplayfulness. Sports asthma, political reminiscences and off-timer jingles are out, vocoder, glockenspiel and booty-shaking beats are in. And why not? *Der Plan* were always past masters of that inane form of satire in which things are presented exactly as they are. *Der Plan* bears keenly precisely because you couldn't see the joke. The views they offered on modern Germany might consequently be considered "childlike", only if the child in question happened to be the one photographed by Diane Arbus clutching a toy hand grenade and gazing at the camera. A similar principle applies to *Die Verschwörung* (*The Conspiracy*), where the arcane forces of the global economy are exposed for all to see from the jawdropping image of the New York Wall's toptowers, reproduced on the album's inner sleeve to the children's chorus decrying the vagueness of Digital Rights Management on "Copyright Slavery". Elsewhere, the mythic clichés of "Germany, Pale Mother" are dragged plodding around the dancefloor on "Deutschland Bleibte Mutter", and the traditional childhood poem "Duskel Wenz" is given a sisterly reworking on the closing bonus track. Comes the time, comes *Der Plan*. If you want it, they'll still get it.

HORATIO RADULESCU

LAO TZU SONATAS
CPO CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Lao Tzu, an older contemporary of Confucius, founded the dominant Chinese philosophy of Taoism. His book *Te Te Ching* advocates a "Tao", or way that renounces worldly desires. In his three Piano Sonatas from the 1990s — the

second, third and fourth — Romanian spectral composer Horatio Radulescu is inspired by Lao, appending phrases from the Tao to his scores. The inspiration is indirect. Such finely individual, powerfully expressive music hardly expresses an ethic of renunciation. However, an ancient, historical awareness permeates Radulescu's music. The creator of spectral techniques elevates them as "a conceptual reply (2000 years later) to Pythagoras", discoverer of the natural harmonic series or spectrum.

Born in 1942 in Bucharest, Radulescu's vision is totally singular, his most quoted creation without parallel. The colossal Fourth String Sonata with its part for a further eight quartets, or Cleydys for 10 "sound wings", grand pianos on their sides whose strings are bowed to produce a tremulous "sound plasma". The sonatas here for a conventional instrument — his first compositions for it since the sonatas of 1960 — are spectacularly inspired, with some mimicking of spectral effects not achievable with actual tuning. The soundworld is like no other, elemental and yet totally contemporary. *The Third Sons* (You Will Explore Forever) is the most substantial at 26 minutes. The opening movement uses the theme from a 13th century Byzantine hymn, while the third pits a traditional Romanian folk melody. The mesmeric spring rhythm of the final movement is described by the composer as "cosmic S莊ar".

The minute long third movement of the Fourth Sonata bears Radulescu's motto "Music... older than Music": 30 seconds of music based on two superimposed Romanian cords are followed by 30 seconds of resonance. Owen Sutlive, a longtime interpreter of Radulescu, gives potent, measured performances of this intricately structured yet compelling and mysterious music. Transcendent mysticism meets scientific rigor in a modern day music of the spheres.

JACK ROSE
RAAG MANIFESTOS
VHIC CD

BY TONY HERRINGTON

The fourteenth, that was how Colle De Seta's Glenn Jones referred to John Fahey from the stage of the recent Ls Weekend festival in Stirling, Scotland. It's no secret that for acoustic guitarists like Jones and his occasional collaborator Jack Rose, Fahey is a monumental figure, comparable to, and no impossible to ignore as, John Coltrane. For the way he took the hallowed, immobile material of an American

folk form and moulded it to a vision that was utterly singular and idiosyncratic but simultaneously cosmic, able to expand to accommodate the world that surrounded it.

Jones's recent solo album, *This Is The Wind That Blows It Out*, sounded like a doppelganger to Fahey's lucid reimagining of the topography of traditional American guitar music, if not the complete liner art that drove it. But as Raag Manifestos, Rose sounds rather removed from Fahey than he did on his previous solo recordings. *Red Rose, White Male and Opium Music*, while the distance separating them from the grueling red noses of fingerpicking guitar, eg Mississippi John Hurt, Rewind Blind Gary Davis, Blind Willie McTell et al, new sounds gather ever than that dividing Arthur Dyer from Coleman Hawkins.

Instead, Raag Manifestos sounds more like an attempt to expand on the fingerpicking philosophies espoused by Fahey's rhythmic associate, Robbie Basho. For some, Basho's solo guitar music, and reputation, will always be compensation for inspiring Will Ackerman to launch the Windham Hill label and with it the cosmopolitan coffee-table ecosystem of New Age music. But it would be more accurate to think of Basho occupying a parallel autonomous zone to Angus MacLise — a zone more extended, making intangible connections across ostensibly alien musical systems, from the hootown to the raga, dreaming up a new universal music that would be myth-poetic rather than merely picturesque.

Pete Bush, marsh of the man on Raag Manifestos, sounds rooted in traditions far removed from the American south, as Rose extrapolates on tunings and scales sourced from Indian and other indigenous Eastern musics. Many of the seven tracks move with an almost frenetic flourish, notes flying like sparks from a pistol shot by Rose's resonating, steel-did fingers. Sometimes the notes are so densely packed, the intervals so close, they gather into great swarms of sound (an equivalent to Basho's snowstorm technique) that descend and envelop the listener in ways no less dramatic nor overwhelming than the guitar music of a plugged-in 'n' amped-up performer like Kelli Hanno.

On the final track, Rose reconciles with the fountainhead, delivering a hushed version of the spiritual "Blessed Be The Name Of The Lord", a reading that recalls Fahey's own Baroque ornamentations of similar sacred material. A hymn, as always, to end, as the master once instructed.

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Screen till you screw: *Phisheticks*

As with several other good records, the new one by Southern California's *Phisheticks*, *I Don't* (Marina (Theologic 7")), requires that you punch its hole before you play it. Once you've done that, you get a 10-second or classically styled SoCal proto-thrash, with more of that da-dooz punk-pop stuff that has made so many recent punk outfitts a lame as toast. This music has a crazy edge, a fine handle on noise and weird highlighting galore. Screen till you screw. Or something like that.

Some said to think of *Cotton Casino* leaving the warm embrace of Acid Mothers Temple, but at least her swearing with the group, *Heads Good Child/Yours My Boy* (Ocche 7") is hot and dreamy. There's also that she has the pleasure of seeing this lauging Japanese psych outfit know that Cotton's presence has always added a certain counterbalance to some of the group members more formal psychodiles. At any rate, the single's great, with layers of wet fabric pressing against clouds that press against the meat in your head. Quite a lovely sensation, really.

Buckets And Batteries are a group of noisy avant-musicians from central New Jersey, although their debut record, *Secret Performances* From The Van Of Helgahead (LP (DHD 7") was recorded outdoors in a few different spots in New England. Wildly disorganized and tough to place in terms of temporal or stylistic boundaries, their sound is somewhere between Sunburned Hand Of The Man, The Peoples' Victory Orchestra & Chorus, and Stompin' Tom. It's a damn fine mix, though not for everyone. And the art at which this record's cover shreds glitter is likely to upset more than one collector's girlfriend, so if you buy it, bag it fast.

The **Designer Babies** may have a point in (more or less) describing themselves as the Melt-Babies of Nottingham. On their second release, *Bagdad Boogie/R' Mist* (Bingo 7") they combine lots of elements inside a small space in ways that are entertaining and noisy. Of course, doing the kind of fast, hard editing that some of the Japanese groups have performed requires a lead of ragged looseness that a hard to imagine. It's impossible to tell from this solo recording just what these guys are like, especially live, but it's a goddamn interesting record. It might lack the overwhelming heat of something like the Lightning Bolt, but then so do I.

My knowledge of Greek groups is lisper this century than it has been at other times, but that won't stop me from listening to the new EP by **Dreg-e-tak**, *Urferito +3* (Splendid Sound 7"). There's damn little info anywhere in the package, although the person in which the record is wrapped is lovely. And really, so is the music. Primarily instrumental, it ranges from blippy analogue-sounding synth movements to nice and specify atmospheric pieces, which are almost like Augustus Pablo playing on top of a slowed down Harmonica album. The other releases from this series are equally interesting and mysterious. There's *Following The Path* (Splendid Sound 7") by **Vasillis Tsougris**. Vasillis is best when he operates as a solo electric guitar player. His playing is perhaps a bit in the Vini Reilly school, striking a beautiful sense of space and rhythmic composition. Third is *The Sound Of Young Helsinki* (Splendid Sound 7") by **The Septemberfunk** (aka Andrew Johnson, ex-House). This one consists of three slowly unfolding minimalist collages that shift with surprisingly delicate electronic fingers. And the packaging is gaudiously bright. Wish I could figure out exactly where they originate from.

Listening right now to a nice collaboration between **Dynasty Yellow Swans** and the enigmatic John Wiles, *Basement Ghosts/Castle EVP* (helicopter 7"). Whose sasquacs (as usual) in making an impressive large racket and he makes the free rock slip action of DYS sound more like a jet engine than you'd ever imagine it could. My copy also came with a CD sampler of material due this year from Wiles's Helicopter label, and it all sounds mighty cool.

The new split by **Hella** and **Forst** is the first in a proposed series of nine singles. We'll see what shapes those take. In the meantime, *Forst's Both When I Am Alone And We Both Are* (Athe 7") is another lovely slant of sampled sound construction. It manages to sago and soothe simultaneously. Nice And Hella (*From Swings/Sermento*) do mostly ensured guitar/drum duo demolitions that are right up with their previous output. What a wonderful future we're tumbling into.

There's a decided information glitch, as evidenced on *driv* (Zero Moon 3" CD), their way of subverting the autonomy of beat inquiry, as well as their approach to the dubby layering of various analogue and digital noises.

but their record, *Solo #2 (Alpha 7")* is really quite heavenly. The A side is some electric guitars, wobbling around as though they're being handled by two slightly hyperactive teens, stoned on good pot, playing along to "Swetness Girlz", while they sit in a darkened bedroom under headphones. The three tracks on the flip have a light, lost and found shimmer, revealing nothing so much as good pot itself.

The **Hunches** debut album was one of the most pleasing new slabs of avant garage garage space since I damn know what. Now they're back with a three song trifecta, *Fuck Disease/Ready/Mother I Because You/Jubilee Vibes* (In The Red 7"), that extends their rough philosophy in several sloppy directions. Perhaps the most interesting is the first track, which makes a rather potent argument against resurrected vices regarding some of the more danceable musical tropes of the Harmonia/99 era. These guys may not have been born while this shit was going down, but that doesn't mean they aren't entitled to their opinion about it.

New fine clacky split single shared between the Pacific Northwest's *Perseus* and Milwaukee's *Jen Musser* (who also runs the *Creature Music* label). Entitled *Solo Percussion For Two* (No label 7") the two sides are just as the title suggests — percussion solos of an extremely organic, almost hermetic nature. Jen's side is said to have been recorded using drumwood, and indeed, it does make my imagine what it must be like to be a box into which people throw small pieces of timber. Musser's side, which it may or may not be playing the right speed, sounds more like thunder trapped inside an elephant's log. So it's hard to pick a favorite.

For some time, Australian audio/visual artist Markus Broad has been releasing droney droney Web-only EPs under the name *Musleen*. Now he has decided to release a couple of pieces on vinyl. The result is *via classic/earthen atom* (Klang Galerie 7"), two nice pieces of gentle electronic invention. They both contain more hints of beat and melody than you might want, but their ambience remains dark, focused and abstract enough to hold your attention.

Normal Music have a very nice take on plch, as evidenced on *driv* (Zero Moon 3" CD), their way of subverting the autonomy of beat inquiry, as well as their approach to the dubby layering of various analogue and digital noises.

put them far ahead of a largely sleepy herd. The basics here get so cracked at times that I imagine this'd be capable of breaking people's bones or the dance floor if played at the right time and volume. Cool.

Debut **Princess Dragonneon** have a yearly ritual, for which they create a Haunted Tube (sort of a round, sealed down Haunted House) every year for Halloween. Their recent release, *PDH's Haunted Tube* (Time Stereo 3" CD), will give you a 19 minute taste of what a ride through the tube would be like. Even less formally coherent than PDM's regular releases, this is a dip into a very low sound ocean. It may be a little smaller to what you'd experience if you were a rookie for *Wet Eyes* on their Japanese stadium tour. A related release is *Live At Worms*, Rotterdam Holland June, 2001 (Time Stereo 3" CD) by **Electric Bear**, one of Dawn Brinley's PDM offshoots, and (on this release, anyway) they present a face that is more notably inoffensive, filled with dashes of non-harsh feedback that will chill your drink faster than crushed mice. Lovers of these sounds may also enjoy *Meeds* (Time Stereo 3" CD), which features *Dawn Brinley* and a couple of charms using a virtual pile of rustible as musical source material. You'll feel like grabbing a shov' and joining in.

Although their name is a crown lie (they are neither, *Nottingham's Wolves* (They're from Greece) are an outfit both hap and hot. The vocals are whiny enough at their snr to make you think about Steve Marley's birthplace, but the general blare on their debut *Nottingham's Wolves* (Bingo 10") posits a noisy rock plateau that is somewhere between Lightning Bolt at their midlowest and Shells at their most evil. There's a wonderful sense of see-saw dynamism here, and enough usk to make anyone sensible do headstands while it plays. Cool.

Mystery disc of the issue is an art-embroidery that was sent anonymously, using The Residents' classic *Duck Sniff* EP as the base. The disc itself has been subjected to a series of radiant burns on each of its sides, and the front cover has been pierced through (it center) by an unusual looking looking bullet, which also offers a blank sheet of cardbord to the snr. It's fun to open, but I won't get any snr to it. There was a time (in the classic RRR art-mix-mix era) that I kept a turntable exclusively for playing such snr. Now I'm a goddamn lightweight. □ Reviewed by Byron Coley



**KURT SCHWITTERS/
JAAP BLOK
URSONATE**

BY JULIAN COWLEY

The germ of Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonate* was the first line of fellow dadaist Raoul Hausmann's phonetic poster poem "Instowtidu" (1918). Throughout the 1920s Schwitters, side member of his own *Merz* movement, mixed them that compacted cluster of letters a self-declared "sonata" of primeval sounds. His own recording, reassembled as a Wergo CD a few years ago, is an important archive piece and that untenable paradox, a data masterwork. The built-in vitality of this singular composition may be gauged from more recent realizations: German musician Eberhard Blum recorded a spiritual and theatrical version in 1991 for Hot Hot. Dutch vocal artist Jaap Blok's new release offers two orally acrobatic enactments — one in studio in 1986, another from a live performance in a chapel in January 2003.

Blok's interpretations closely observe Schwitters's free-score — an opening tempo is followed by sections marked largo, scherzo and presto. The performer's improved 1986 reading concludes the presentation. The later version has a few textual slips in the execution, but its energy is arguably more fervent to the spirit of the piece, which Schwitters himself felt was better heard than read. Like Joyce, Kafka and other less overtly radical practitioners of literary modernism, Schwitters was acutely aware of language as an extremely physical phenomenon, intransigent in the human body and its enveloping environments. The recording by Blok, a virtuous fastid, was in terms of gusto and emphatic articulation. Blok's performances have more of the sound poet's concern for the sense within nonsense, closer attention to the emotional load that phonemes can strongly bear, even when distorted, implausibly fractured or parodied still further.

TRIO SOLOTAREV

VERTIGE
STRANDVARIUS CD

**MAX NAGL/OTTO LECHNER/
BRADLEY JONES**

FLAMINGOS
HAROLDY CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

To aficionados of the instrument, the accordion offers everything a piano does, but with the greater expressive potential offered by wind and

reeds rather than hammer and string. Something of that partisan enthusiasm is displayed by the Solotarev on their CD of compositions by Ligeti, Gabaduina, Schnittke, Tresuau and Kapustin. They flavor the *bagat*, the Russian ascription that Soli Gabaduina has done much to popularize with her well-traveled compositions. Sonate Et Expecto (1985, for solo bagan) and In Cruce (originally composed for ocarina and organ in 1979 but adapted in 1993 for solo and bagan) these pieces take up almost half the playing time on *Vertige*. Though there are a number of solid performances already on CD, these have not been recommended, partly because of what the rest of the programme offers.

Anatoli Kapustin's Sonatas (1975), originally for solo bagan but so complicated that a studio version was made in 1991, is a highly integrated ensemble music in which linear fragments flesh back and forth between the members of the Solotarev. The execution of the sonata's three movements is superb. No formal boundaries are broken — it's a much less adventurous composition than the others on *Vertige*, but it's very satisfying. As is József Lengyel's brief *Motet* (1987) for bagan trio, though close attention is required to deduce what it's about. The flavor of his piece — rhythmic, staccato, fragmentary, apparently directionless on a moment by moment basis but overall overall — denies the listener knowledge as to how it will play out. György Ligeti's *Nancarrowish* and faintly *Incisive* *Merlín*, Cobane Félix *Siflur* and C'Escailler *Quatre Discos* are adaptations of Studies 9, 14a and 13 from Book Two of his *Études*. Paul Pino, Alfred Schnittke provides *Hommage à Stravinsky*, *Prokofiev* & *Shostakovich*, a piece that exercises his experimental and avant-garde demons in a typically showy but, on this occasion, compelling manner.

Rather more playful, witty and sensuous are the pieces that Max Nagl has composed for *Flamingos*. His previously written off Nagl as a strong but undevoutly saigonist, and his compositions as too concept-heavy and fuzzy. Max fed me *Flamingos* plays to his strengths and offers something more. Partly that's to do with the members of his current trio — Otto Lechner (accretion) and Bradley Jones (double bass) — who know when to embangle a line, when to stand mute and just how long a solo should last. Moreover, they contribute hugely to the compositions, and from the recorded evidence, most definitely enjoy playing them. The CD is influenced by, though not quite on homage

to, Charles Mingus, whose "Work Song/Haitian Fight Song" and an idiosyncratic version of "Wendy Nightmare" are included. But "Eagz" sounds much more like a Europeanized and updated version of Omieva Coleman's Atlantic quartet. If you can imagine the Ting Bell line playing *Frère Régis* *Magnificat* compositions that have been arranged by Raymond Scott, you'll be getting near the mark.

SONIC LIBERATION FRONT

ASH-E GO-GO
HIGH TWO CD
BY BEN WATSON

Four years ago, *Sonic Liberation Front's* *Water And Stone* (*Eye Dog*) was a revelation: Ra-style rhythmic complexity and serious horn lines recorded with jaw-dropping finesse, a hypnotic *Yardbird* drum circle encountering highfly antiquated jazz speculations. There's been some change of personnel since 2000 — Kevin O'Neill, Chuckie Joseph (percussion), Terry Lawson (tenor) and Adam Jenkins (alto) are still on board, Julie Berrios (pianist), Andy Gazzola (bass) and Dan Scialfa (alto) are newcomers — but the group still makes music to its exciting standards. The new addition is words — brief moments where the instrumental argument breaks into multipet singing with the overlapping, circular quality of voodoo chants. Singers Vanessa Santi and Fabrini bring the music into the orbit of World Music, yet succeed in demonstrating how close to African models much of the finale's music of Ray and Coleman actually was.

As a catch-all, the term "jazz" has become well nigh useless. *Sonic Liberation Front* reject the motifs that have congealed into cliché, and come up with a music where intuitions rhyme and analytical intellect jostle each other and become one. The recording by Kevin O'Neill and Brenda Berrios at 3LP's "underhanded location" is uniformly superb, giving alto(s), tenor, saxes, clarinet, chakhe, chakhe, dave!, patoo and drum 8th such rotundity and resonance you're shamed to the orbs.

DA SPOOKY

CELESTIAL MECHANIX: THE
BLUE SERIES MASTERMIX
THIRSTY EAR CD
BY MATTHEW INGRAM

Da Rens project commences the 30th release thesis in Thirsty Ear's Blue Series, an attempt to configure a vibrant electro-jazz branch to match the legendary Blue Note imprint of the 60s. For every jazz nerd, project featuring between the

prolific and revolutionary — Richard Maxfield's colleagues, Terry Riley's cut-use of *Chet Baker* — there is one thumb-suck, courtesy of US3, *Do Bop* and Mo' Wax. Thankfully, on this collection, which comes with a free mix CD, Spooky brings enough austerity to make the offering marginally more *Cecil Taylor* than *Horne Silver*.

Say what you will about Spooky's occasionally non-visual flagrancy, upping the ante, a postmodern agent bent on the human partytask of reconfiguring avant-garde thought within the framework of modern culture, you can't fault his gigantic sonic canvases. If he isn't as venomous and thrilling a vision of *HipHop* as *Uj*, there is still much in the way of glacial excellence here, for instance in the waves of multiplying cymbal feedback and gang drums on pianist Matthew Ingram's *zodin*-Gestalt-*Reverb* "IaTheory_mme", after-trails of spinnings talking between the hulls of oil tankers. Spooky favours a high degree of separation between his undistorted drum patterns on one hand and his sonics on the other. He foregrounds this methodological separation on *Anansi's Gambit* to the strongest effect, taking his snuffing chords to town in a stubborn stay/start breakbeat.

Occasionally you wonder how well served the more open tricks by seems contritebills *Shop* and *Maf Maries* are. One of Spooky's recent remarks, "Morton Feldman, you could just add a little beat underneath", inspires concern, though on *Momposinos Assasining*, which dispatches with drums in the name of *ambience* (*liberation?*), he shows how he can complement the free fall crew its *ProBleed*, trebled sax lines and digital transposition reveal a *Manon Brown*-styled ARP-baubled squiggle space.

SUNN O)))

WHITE II
SOUTHERN LORD CD
BY ANNA CLARKE

In 1998, New York's *Sunn O)))* set out with the mission to become a living homage to slow down luminaries Earth. But guitars Stephen O'Malley (*Khruang*, *Burning Witch*) and Greg Anderson (*Gospo*), who together not the consistently excellent Southern Lord label, simply use this reference as a starting block for their own Black Metal message. Although influences such as *Slayer*, Earth, and Mayhem clearly dominate their transfixing heavy rock soundscapes, less obvious stimuli are the likes of *Col* and *Kelly Ikkana*, who guide the duo to more experimental extremes. While 2 mixes their usual combative drone with

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The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Shining sharp: Rhoda Bates at Freedom Of The City

The annual Freedom Of The City at London's Conway Hall continues the tradition — or anti-tradition — of Derek Bailey's Company Week. Designer Martin Davidson presents one-off groups appear together with established aggregations, which appear on this compilation from last year's event on his own label *Freedom Of The City 2002: Small Groups* (Emerson 2CD). Eight groups contribute a track each.

Among the outstanding items is "Spokes", by the duo of John Butcher (piano and tenor sax) and John Edwards (double bass) — two of the most committed free improvisers, with seemingly not a jazz bone in their bodies, in a beautifully poised performance of great intensity. Another duo — Stefan Kause on soprano sax with John Russell on guitar — create pleasure, buxom and explosive interactions on "Mama'll Says Hello", with Kause producing a range of billy calls and turky gobbling on this unexpected surprise. "Dreamers" by Rhoda Davies (harp, Mark Neistat (cello) and Simon H. Fell (bass) is music of grace though sometimes dramatic gestures. Other performers include the trio of Alan Tomlinson, Steve Beresford and Roger Turner, and Alan Wilkinson, Marco Martos and Steve Noble (trio).

Fans of The Is Spokin' Tap will greet the term "jazz odyssey" with a smile. As The Tap's guitarists famously observed, "Jazz is just a series of mistakes without the 'oops'." They wouldn't have enjoyed *Europe Jazz Odyssey: Adventures In European New Jazz And Improvised Music* (Europe Jazz Odyssey CD), then the CD arises out of the European Unions bid to establish to create a platform for cultural cooperation in jazz throughout member states. There are ten contributions, the best of which are really driving, the worst excruciating. Worst of the worst is "Art & Fury" by the Berlin 80 (Björn and Mathias Rönnig of Vienna Art Orchestra), a clunkily bombastic blues which is neither art nor fun. Invisible Correspondence (Doris) and Sound Of Choice, led by electric guitarist Håste Poulsen, and French string ensemble Quatuor 60 provide a tedious rock wiggat (volume turned all the way up to 11) bisected by slabs of nondescript classical music. Slightly more interesting, but rather longwinded is Mathew Journe's "The Electro Dr M P I" (Doge-Dog), which modulates along like a Weather Report outtake. Best of the bunch is the trumpet solo "Kursi Yama (Black Mountain)", with its shakuhachi styling, contributed by Sepherett's Arve Henriksen. One of the Euroscopists' marathons is "Increased Bureaucracy leads to mediocrity". Europe Jazz Odyssey won't bring

about a change of mind. (BM)

Melatonia: Meditations On Sound In Sleep (Room 2002) is a collection of mesmerising Ambient shimmers, featuring contributions from Manas Rosenthal, DJ/suprise, Scanner, David Toop and others. It's not the first time that electronic music has addressed the concept of sleep, Tangerine's *Goodnight: Music To Sleep By* is a great recent example, but it is probably the first to oblige insomnia, a naturally occurring brain hormone, also used by many as a sleep aid, as an inspiration (maven over, LSD and ecstasy). One can only suspect that compilations based around valeren root and goldenseal will follow. The tracks have dreamy titles like "Moving Into Moonlight" and "Bedtime Lullaby (Worm Milk)". Not two pieces are alike, each reveals the unique stamp of the artist who made it. Some are soothie, some full of gentle jolts, others are quiet easy doses. Chickens chirp, wind howls, frogs croak. The insulation chemical is also implicated in drowsing, and some of that hallucinatory quality is reflected in tracks like Al Tornatore's "Dreaming Of Swimming In Green Enamel Water".

In his cryptic sleeve-note, Lawrence English observes that "reading is noted by many sleep researchers to be a quite unusual process, whereby words simply fall off the page." He goes on to suggest that the same is true for the sounds we hear in dreams. But as a whole, much of this collection verges on being too soothie, too soft, and too pale and watery, like a cup of weak camomile tea. After listening to all 23 tracks, one wishes for some big, crashing noises, or anything loud and shocking to shake off all the sleepiness. Because, as anyone with a childhood fear of monsters knows, sleep can be a very scary thing. (GD)

Who Wants To Be A Millionaire (Klangtong CD) opens with the inclusion Guy Michelmore ("Hello I'm a film and TV composer") explaining how he longs to send your music to TCM of Hollywood's top directors and music supervisors. All you have to do is compose a 45-second theme for a new TV quiz show, dreamed up by the creators of the unstoppable *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire*.

Dreaming already? This irresistible opportunity was focused on the cover CD of a music trade mag, and Klangtong has offered it as inspiration to 15 dedicated non-TV composers. The original music for *Millionaire* (thankfully not included here) was eight up with host Chris Tarrant's dancemania as one of TV's most heartily obnoxious features. The resultant compilation is a mix of content from oddball laptop bluffs, directed at the brown-nosed sound who compose TV music — a chap away of TV speak over dry, edge-beats.

Feeble walk from Jayepe, Donna Summer (aka Jason Forrest) and Mondomani. Human 'Sack' Dugler knocks out a hilarious parody of espinging homemade music, all stumbling guitar and baby howling in the background. Zorkitzer estuaries beats in favour of an abstract mini-drama, while Béhard Ehlers dispenses with samples altogether in his jittery *Swingbeat* tentatively Vert (aka Adam Dettner) goes for beautiful, dreamy the TV master's voice into soup and painting a dreamy seascape with a splash of accordion. All reminding us that the answer to the title's question was traditionally, "I don't!" (GD)

In 2001 the Quebec audio art collective Astor, founded by Christel Mignone and Jocelyn Robert, invited eight composers to remix an album from the 1980s R&B catalogue. The outcome was *OHM* (Astor CD), an album of original material in which the same idea is a trigger, and highly relevant to appreciation of the music. Rall Weisbudy builds a dark, twinkling landscape of mystery, and David Kretnik also has his eye on a far horizon across a shimmering desert — those two standards are drowsy tracks for insomniacs and Alain Robbe-Grillet fans. Martin Trebitsch's concise composition has the best title, "A Block Of Brown Speed With Two Holes". Alexandre St-Orge washes us down with white noise. Christian Colom, Tena Thaumet and Diane Lelissope all contribute substantial pieces. John Dowd focuses on very specific material: "Dragonfly" is an absurd drama, a man and woman lost in telephone non-communication, while "Bridge" is a swelling flood of planes. An intriguing collection, though nothing feels really essential. (GD)

Great Meals 8-Bits Downtown (EMI CD) is a compilation by Don Letts of "The Hip Hop Sound Of New York 1981-82", that pivotal urban moment when Sugarhill rap was giving way to something more durable and minimal, when dub was opening up a load of new gaps in the mix and when Afrika Bambaataa was bleeding white his copies of Korfwerk's *Trans-Europe Express* and The Men Above on the turntables. The influence of the latter beats directly on tracks like The Fearless Four's "Rockin' It", passed ensemble rep understood by Teletext gilders.

This compilation admirably depicts the sonic topography of NYC in the early 80s, including not only obvious landmarks like Grandmaster Flash's revolutionary montage "The Adventures Of Grandmaster Flash On The Wheels Of Steel" but also the ex-pat, ex-punk Brits sniffing around in search of something hot and fresh. Malcolm McLaren's "Buffalo Gals" is included

here, hard to dislike despite its opportunism, as is The Clash's "Dudufo Be Good", the original white noise notes practically obliterated in a dub mélange. For all their concern about black music, The Clash buckled under the weight of its influence. Some minor tracks prove more illuminating, including Search Me/Grand Wizard Theodore's "Showdown Theme", prototype bassbox fare wreathed in a fog of scope and The Monkees' "Champ", a 1960s classic asset stripped for its rhythmic bones by early Hip-Hop. Things changed for ever in this time and place, and the keeping and melting soil makes for gripping listening. This collection will make you rich. (DS)

Constructive Seaweed (Galaxy 2CD) is a compilation/project funded by the Swiss Arts Council to herald the building of a rail link between the Gotthard and Lötschberg, connecting the north and south of the Alps. The perhaps inessential first CD consists of numerous, arameated field recordings of work in progress, the rotation of cement mixers, the vibration of tools against metal, the whine of the drill, etc. The second CD features tracks commissioned from 13 artists, a number of them Swiss, plus an international cast including Femmes and Egyptian Relist, representing the various nationalities of those working on the construction site, a dedication that smacks of conceptualism for conceptualism's sake, but never mind. Their job is to spin up music from the raw material of dirt one.

Overall, the collection has a North African clang about it — a sleek, synth-drenched, untroubled hymn of praise to the benign triumph of technology over formidable nature. Among the highlights are Yello and Boris Blank's "Lightphasers", one of his best efforts in years, capturing the sheen of the tunnel, the remissiveness of the dirt, the blare of light at the other end and the general, forboding gaudiness of the underbelly. Whereas Blank, as his cinematic wont, stresses the macro, artists like Donax, Jean Quenza zoom in on the micro details. Their "Night & Day & Night" could be an examination of the disruption to insect life caused by the excavation. On "Dirt", Berlin's Monolite focus on a pulsing rhythm, the heart of the operation, while not so engrossed in their telescope as to block out the dark sweep of the tunnel interior. In "B7", meanwhile, Femmes works up a small, inconsequential drilling into a vast, gaudy canvas of what sounds like a full-blown symphony struggling to escape from a cocoon of abstract, grainy noise. (DS) □

Reviewed by Clive Bell, Geeta Dayal, Andy Hamilton, Brian Marley and David Stubbs

vacuums of serious white noise, dead rock, wooks, and some of the most inventive guitar playing the group have put to record.

Ex-bass player Jon Preston shopped in as last year's *White 1*, and resumes with an appearance — alongside fellow contributors Rob Ritter and Aditi Collier — on the three track follow up, *White 2* (like all *Surf DJ's* recordings, *White 2* effectively loops with ultimate low end frequencies that fit between dark feedbacked violence and passages of beautifully composed, intricate all-melodies). The opening track, "Hell-DY-WEEK" is torn apart by a chattering distorted power chord that repeats continuously for several minutes until the resonance becomes so intense that the sound begins to eat on itself, creating a thick, subliminal cloud of oscillating noise. *Surf DJ's* distinctive way of using guitar to envelop the listener in neutral pits of sound comes fully into play here — most memorably on the album's second track, "basslines". Above an arbitrary number of heavily delayed bass, the guitarsituation delicately played lattice of scraping strings that eventually collapses into an idiosyncratically doffing of or random admiring notes and lay atmospheres.

SUSANNA & THE MAGICAL ORCHESTRA LISTS OF LIGHTS AND BUOYS

RUNE GRAMMOPHON CD

BY MIKE CLARKE

Young Norwegian singer Susanna Wallumrød has only one member in her orchestra — ex-jazzman keyboardist Morten Øverdal. Both are based in Kongsvinger, a small town west of Oslo best known for its fine thinking jazz festival. The couple's spare, loosely threaded soundscapes are created through a minimalist set-up of keyboard, harmonium and acoustic, which provide a vibrant range of textures for Wallumrød's angelic, wending vocals to curl around.

The introductory two tracks on their debut album, *Lists Of Lights And Buoys*, are covers. The first, an intriguing rendition of Leonard Bernstein's "Who Am I", opens with Wallumrød's a cappella verse, occasionally coloured by solitary dashes of keyboard. Her style of singing — somewhat, mellifluous, sustained — charmingly complements Bernstein's composition, and when the route breaks halfway through and the instrumentation kicks up a step, she gracefully embodies the fuller sound as her voice plays up to the sparkling cascade of euphoria. When applied to a slowed down, sleepy version of Dolly Parton's "Jolene", however, these enchanting qualities have a tendency to bleed into tedium, whereas, and the intimacy of the original is somewhat lost.

The following nine tracks are original arrangements and show off the duo's flair for unusually stylised rhythm, which is made all the more distinctive due to the lightness of the instrumentation. Although Øverdal's mesmeric spider webs of sound function mainly to create an atmospheric backdrop for Wallumrød's vocals, they also provide a gentle rhythmic pulse that she can work against. Often, her voice will dip prematurely to the bar, or linger freely and indecisively into the middle of another before dropping in to conclude a lyric that would otherwise sound finished. The odd configuration, combined with the strength of Wallumrød's vocals and her peculiar, clipped intonation, steers *Lists Of Lights And Buoys* away from predictability, making it a rewarding listen.

The interweaving of idiosyncratic textures and timing gradually shapes an appealing silhouette of sound that alternately deepens and pales, allowing Wallumrød to whip and tuck her vocals around the sweet playness of minor chords and the infrequent beat of a timpani.

CECIL TAYLOR & MAT MANERI ALGONQUIN

BLURR CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

One of the oddest experiences I've had in a concert hall was witnessing Cecil Taylor and Tony Iommi tackle the meagre attempts of the Bang On A Can All-Stars to occupy an improviser's space. The occasion at London's Barbican Hall was billed as a Taylor "new work", and it started with the pianist unearthing the Bang On A Can people to ceremoniously shred the sketches he'd given them on manuscrit paper. Taylor knew this ritual would rob them of their own sheets and he gleefully watched as they then stumbled like farforn dogs on a polished floor, without any idea of how to lever themselves into the unfolding dialogue between piano and percussions.

As Bill Steinkraus puts it in his note to this new CD, Taylor dismissed composition as an "enigma's nightmare" during a 1987 interview in *The Wire*, and Algonquin is another example of an institution — in this case the Library of Congress — opening a can of cultural worms by commissioning a "new work" from Taylor. This 1999 assignment required a violin/piano duo and Taylor again produced a sketchy sheet of manuscrit paper, the difference being that on this occasion a great improviser — violinist Mat Maneri — joined Taylor to squeeze the potential out of his wiggles and doodles.

If a Western notion of composition had metering for Taylor then this performance would presumably have employed wildly different structural ideas and melodic forms from his other work. Of course, it doesn't. In fact, the main distinction between this project and Taylor's standard group is not a compositional choice, but simply the unique flavor lent by Maneri's personal feel for melody and his snake-like melodic loops. The performance opens with a short burst of Taylor's poetry, which Maneri underpins with lines at once exceptionally beautiful and distressingly melancholic. A lighter repeat has seen such plain melodic speaking since the enigmatic passages on the title track of *Conquistador!*, and Taylor follows his customary exploratory bass ramblings with harp-like sounds from inside the piano.

Teep's playing throughout the rest of the album is stirring, muscular and much less vicious. Only a few minutes in and he wryly responds to this eccl-classical scenario with splashes of fear-impressionism that are then imploded, and when it seems Maneri is about to drop into a Yesness Waltz, Taylor does all he can to man on his 3/4 parade with rhythmic licks and thunderous clusters. Each man takes a brief solo piece and they then resolve for a final duet that spans musically for 13 minutes.

TERROR AT THE OPERA SNAKE BIRD BLUE

NO SICKS CD

BY MIKE CLARKE

Terror At The Opera might be guitarist and vocalist Gretchen Gonzalez, from Detroit all-

female rock quartet Shambler Party, and vocalist and accordionist Ruth Goad, but some of the music on this record sounds like it could have been overhead at a country fair a century ago. The two voices sing in unison for more than 10 minutes, which adds to the singling effect. "Lovely Day" starts off with an enthusiastic nursery rhyme cum-bestory, which finds the singer simultaneously armchairing the beasts of the field and birds of the air.

After this sunny, dreamlike start, the record goes more and more狂野. The studio acoustics give the two main instruments — augmented by occasional synth, rhythm box and percussion — an appealing rough, warm sound. It feels like the two musicians are invoking the ghosts of long dead parlour tunes, drinking songs and sea shanties. "I knew with your blood on my hands" didn't stand a chance," they sing, as "Let's Pretend", a brief portal into a winter world populated with mythical creatures, and where the glass and the wine converse.

While "Build Your House" sounds like a hitherto unimagined meeting between The McNamee sisters and the Lonesome Dogger, "Book Of Eve" recalls the sort of song Lou Reed gave Mo Tucker — or maybe a Phil Spector girl group, albeit with his Wall of Sound replaced by accordion and new staircase guitars.

DAVID TOOP & MAX EASTLEY DOLT CREATURE

HIP-HOP CD

BY AOKI SUZUKI & DAVID TOOP

BREATH-TAKING

CONTRIBUTED BY GIVE BELL

David Toop's new book *Haunted Weather* contains a charming cartoon drawing by Aiko Suzuki of his 2003 London concert with Teep: a pair of cops squat on the floor, playing for an audience of one. The Suzuki pose is busy scraping a bass plate, producing multi-phonic clacks, rhythmic patterns and harsh metallic clicks, while the Teep loop bows down a bone flute. Both musicians invent their own instruments and assorted sonic devices. Teep's answer to Suzuki's versatile plate inlining plucks objects over a small microphone, generating immature tinnitus of feedback. Suzuki switches to a double reed pipe, while Teep's farts give off low, owl-like hoots, or whistle up plumes which vanish into the atmosphere of dog scatounds. Recorded live in the small space below Mark Weisstaub's Sound 323 record shop, this is an intimate improvising which combines delay and a sense of play in how Teep sustains his performance never failing to impress his listeners that to play music is indeed to play — so well does he communicate his unanticipated delight in the sound of, say, stones rubbed together. The best passages are multi-dimensional, where bass plate, reeds, flutes and feedback all sing along together.

Those like myself who are enthusiastic for Teep's flute and guitar playing, for Max Eastley's sound sculptures and for the opulent mystique of their 1994 release *Baked Dreams*, may find themselves bemused by Dolt Creature. Here, Teep has taken recordings of himself and Eastley, and combined, edited and processed them. Voices of Eastley's graceful sculptures are audible, but as Eastley is also credited with "weather" and "computer", who is doing what is anyone's guess. This is a dark, restless album,

full of insectoid scrabbblings. It's as if we're trapped in the undergrowth of a garden where some tiny creature just out of sight is gasping its last breath — a garden of delights designed by Hieronymus Bosch and David Lynch. This may well be music influenced by the wildlife and environmental recordings of Chris Watson and others, but there's a hypermed, digital heartlessness about it that creates unease. The last few tracks open out a little, allowing in a measure of calm, but not much. The warmth and exuberance of *Baked Dreams* have been replaced by the desecrated loneliness of a wintry desert.

PAU TORRES MY WRONG MOOD

TESTING GROUND CD

BY TONY HERRINGTON

A record of electronic-acoustic (as opposed to electroacoustic) mixes-en-solos that ooze the ambient moods and oppressive atmospheres of nor.

Pau Torres is a Spanish composer, and *My Wrong Mood* is his second release for the Berlin-based testing ground label, following the 2002 3" CD, *Songs For Pida*. That record sits somewhere in a recent continuum of moribund electronica that links Tori Amos to David Shear via Olafur Arnalds. Here, the mood is set by the opening version of Dmitri Coleman's "Sedness". Saxophonist Agusti Montoya plays Dmitri's keening melodic line straight, and Torres replaces the artfully tonalities presented for the original by David Izenman's onus bass with the ambiguous tonalities produced by sound seeping down through layers of digital processing. Many of the tracks contain what sound like recordings of banal human activity, but abdicated under the microscopic lens of dose mixing, and cloaked by that layer of electronic synthesis. Someone prepares a meal, has a conversation, dispenses of a body, walks along a driveway, assembles a nail bench. Or none of these things. The classic nor mood of domestic dread is amplified by the use of saxophone, guitar or trumpet to carry minor key melodies that hang over the action in neon-lit arcs full of blue notes.

For "Nostalgia Coupling" and "Pith", Torres looks to the model that post-war Elektronische Musik provided the modernist composer, Stockhausen's *Studi*, for instance, suspending amorphous globes of synthetic sound in reverberant space, then turning them suddenly through oblique angles. Wie an Alexander Calder mobile caught in a nut of art, "The Anti-Song" is a jazz ballad cut to ribbons by nineties noise bursts and disseminated dialogue; it sounds like an outtake from the first Grand Zero album. But everywhere the textures are so rich and deep and pizzed I want to pass my hand over them, feel them rippling beneath my fingers, sensual and suggestive.

If Kathryn Bigelow ever gets round to filming the future-narrative of Philip K. Dick's *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said*, she now has a soundtrack ready made and waiting.

TU M' POP INVOLVED [VERSION 3.0]

HALT CD

BY MATT PYTHIE

Ever inventive and stylised in their modes of production, Northern Ireland's Filt label has moved on from their Invalid Object Series of

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound



Self seekers: Tortoise

It's eight years since *Tortoise's* second album, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (Thrill Jockey CD), was the *Wire's* record of the year, and it is now being reissued along with 1998's *TNT* (Thrill Jockey CD). Listening to these albums is still a rich pleasure, and they look like twin musical peaks of that decade. Right from the opening of the 21 minute suite "Djed" – those swing, creaky sounds, the low baseline, drifts of guitar colour – the exuberance is palpable. Then the drum kit starts to kick, beneath a sky swollen with whistling nooses and dark organ clouds. Its music busting with potential, and in no genre at all, though soon to have the post-rock label! I slipped across it, *Tortoise* have always felt like a group where drummers and bassists ruled – live several members took a turn in the drum chair – and tones tend to appear first on bass guitar. *Tortoise* build from Steve Reich inspired minimalist and vices. Delight comes both from the subtleties of the production and the care taken over the sounds: a bass guitar can have like a substitution or clatter like a farm cart. Solid studio savvy goes hand in hand with intelligent, disciplined instrumental playing. At a point in time *Wire* machines and excess seemed to be taking over, this cool, human restraint was all the more welcome. The drumming on "TNT" and "Tame" is a case in point – not an ineger or unnecessary note. This segues into the hymn-like closer, "Along The Banks Of Rivers". Much of this album has a sunset melancholy, filtered through group playing sleek with understatement.

TNT sprawls by comparison, at 65 minutes to *Millions'* compact 43. Self-editing guitarists Jeff Parker has now fully joined the group, bassoonists and hornblowers are drafted in to broaden the palette, and *Tortoise's* stodgy experimentation has grown in confidence.

There's a gentle humour in the style switching, in the games with drum machines and click synths. There's also great melodic ("I See My Face To The Inside") and sequencer playing ("The Suspension Bridge At Iguazu Falls"), no dull trills, no errors of judgment – it's a classic (CR).

The residue of militant guitar classicists **Die Härts**' 1983 debut album, *Burner* (The Ice (The Thing) CD) helps to complete the picture of the storied artistic ferment of Berlin. It's also of interest to Neil Cave collectors, as he guests on four of the seven tracks, recorded by the otherwise instrumental combo in the volatile period before the collapse of The Birthday Party and the rise of The Bad Seeds. Too often, *Burner* the ice – all clattering guitars, jumpy bass, stony drumming – becomes lost in its own futility, chaotic mess instead of channelling into

something sharper and more intense. "Truck Love" is one of the few songs focused enough to electrically. Cave howls and growls menacingly, chanting: "We can't stop the mansion" over music so harsh and abrasives that it sounds like it wants to cut itself open.

The reissue is handsomely packaged, with an elaborate 24 page booklet featuring a heavily detailed biography and many rare photographs. A limited edition with a bonus DVD shows live footage of *Die Härts* on tour with the Birthday Party in 1982. The footage is murky but ferocious, and makes it easy to believe that this group was best experienced live (GD).

Two reissues from **Elektroakustik Neubauten** capture both ends of their working spectrum. *Kalte Steme: Early Recordings (1980-1983)* is the one that ensures you in its metal gro, comprising cuts from 1980 to 1983. It's a reminder that a lot of the shoddy theatre of early *Neubauten*, the onstage industrial machinery the driving through the floor of the ICA, while attention catching, served to distract from the decomposition they were actually working, one more noisier even than that of *ark*. As the antithesis of "Für Den Untergang" and "Tanz-Zu-Du" illustrate, they were at once primitive and avant garde, rejecting the establishing premises of synth as well as the overwrought sonorosity of rock, going back to a set of first principles of their own making. On "Thrity Animal" with Lydia Lunch, the sound Blie Bagel and co achieve prompts imitations of a pre-rock 'n' roll serial evolution, as if in 1946, disaffected European youth had assembled a new, post-war sound from the post-war detritus of buckled metal, sirens and malfunctioning radios. The feeble but periodic pulse of "DestruktionsTier", meanwhile, reminds you that, like *Die Härts*, *Neubauten* were propelled by a notion of weakness rather than of industrial strength.

Tabata Rasa (1983) was first released in 1993. Bagel had always described *Neubauten* as a "pop group", maybe as a savvy one eye to its extremist loyalists, maybe also out of a deeper craving for wider attention. Here, the hurricane of early *Neubauten* mostly spent, they take stock and diversify. The results are more accomplished, less viscerally thrilling. Tracks like "Zebulon" are awfully straight, the porcelain Goth of "Blume" reflecting but hardly transmitting. Only with the 15 minute "Headcleaner" do *Neubauten* go back to the old ways – scrunching, fragmented collage, punctuated by exuberating, near-silences and homebuilt percussive/concussive devices. But it isn't enough to convince overall. The use of English vocals on *Tabata Rasa* immediately replaces an unenviably sense of *Neubauten's* insouciousness with an equally unwanted sense of naivety. The second

CD features alternative versions of "Blume" and various extra tracks, the best of which is "3 Thoughts", a meditation on male sexuality and violence over a tease, ins, rhythmic patter (GD).

The invitation of the best of **A Certain Ratio's** back catalogue continues with *Sextet* (Seed Jazz CD). Although it first came out in January 1982 and followed on very quickly after their debut, *To Each...*, it nonetheless feels like ACR in their late autumn, working in the long shadows of their previous achievements. Although their sound is increasingly vanished and sparse, there is still something unacceptable and unplaceable about ACR's methodical sed ushers in. *Martha Tiers*' fat voxals are vital in their iniquity, a bloodless counterpart to the punks of *fatbeats* like "Wet Silk Water", and the angular, apopunk funk of "Day One", the standout track after this. Yet, it wasn't so very long after this that *A Certain Ratio* took off into the exultant form of *A Certain Ratio*, aspiring mostly to swell the ranks of colourful jazz funk efficiency and consequently falling apart and away of the two bonus tracks, "Kether Hot Kevens" begins promisingly but diverts into an extensive, aimless, mid-piece tour of the more and less modic tics of their punky funk armory. "Furukusa" is similarly offbeat but with its wild bleats of blare emanating from just over the horizon, at least carries with it some of ACR's oblique ambience (DS).

Soft Machine's *Live In Paris May 2nd, 1972* (Cuneiform 2002) documents a short-lived line-up: Elton Dean, Hug Ross, John Marshall and Mike Ratledge. This group's only studio release was also of *Five*. All the pieces played here, part of a "Pop Week" at the legendary Paris Olympia, come from *Tard* and *Fifth*. There's a roiling does this going on with *The Softs* that finally Marshall is on his way in and Dean is on his way out, led by the abrupt dismissal of drummer Phil Howard. Maybe this contributes to a slimmer joyous, intertwined feel to the evening. Dean's attempt to sear the swift into the valley of fire blowing has triggered an unseemly crisis as to what the group is for. Dean's saecle on "Plan Tiffs" and "All White" is nasal and mirthless. On Ratledge's "Deep" Dean contributes buoyant piano behind Ratledge's fuzz-agan solking – at least it would be weird, if much better – but the piano has one distorted bum note, and it's a relief when Dean finally picks up his alto sax for Hopper's "MC". Group interaction sparks like fire here and there, but the musician who comes over best is drummer Marshall, who plays with hungry energy and at least sounds like he's enjoying himself. The scampering of "Out-Blody-Rejigous" is particularly good, as Marshall looks into Hopper's bass and varies his colours well. The sound of the live recording is clear, if not

atmospheric, and the drums sound great. However, a comparison with some of the same pieces recorded by the BBC two years earlier with Robert Wyatt on drums, shows Dean trying harder and sounding lamer. In 1970 *Soft Machine* could never have been accused of being a jazz group. (DS)

In the early 60s British alto saxophonist **Trevor Watts** met John Steers and Paul Rutherford and formed what was to become Spontaneous Music Ensemble, and later *Amalgam*, though Watts never acknowledged the description. It seems innocent enough to deserve the later *70s* group as jazz rock. *Amalgam's* most significant, peaking group was between around 1974 and 1979, when it featured Keith Rowe (guitar), Colin McKenzie (bass guitar) and Liam Genockey (drums). Rowe is absent from 1977's *Samavaya* (FMR CD), which has Michael, Genockey and earlier members Dave Gale on guitar and Peter Cownley on bass guitar. Even more than Miles Davis' landmark fusion albums – which provided a template from Bill Laswell – the low end is attenuated. But still the results seem deified: the highlight is a searing mid-tempo interlude on "Miles" (FW).

Finland composer **Kaija Saariaho** has always been strongly influenced by natural phenomena, perhaps most famously the Aurora Borealis in her haunting *Orphéus*. A new compilation brings together the two halves of her majestic orchestral duopart *Du Crystal* and *...À La Fiance* (Ondine CD) from 1989 and 1990. Inspired by Hann Atlan's book, it's a sonic examination of two radically different physical states, the orderly crystalline structure of the opening ensemble as against the more fugitive and evanescent qualities of the solo parts (piano and cello, both possessed) in the latter. The Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen are magnificent and so are the two soloists, Teisti Parks and cellist Anssi Karttunen. *Gold* has always been one of her favorite instruments and the latest work represented on the set is *Sept Aleyon* with Karttunen again, a sequence of ephemeral "butterflies" written immediately after Saariaho's open *À la Fiance* and the perfect counterbalance to its long periods. The final piece is probably the best known, but only because it bears the imprint of The Kronos Quartet. *Mythique* is the third in Saariaho's *Jardin Secret* sequence, a virtuous deployment of the most "classical" of ensembles again using sound processing and an extraordinary range of techniques and dynamics. Not perhaps the Saariaho album for beginners – you want something with *Orphéus* for that – but a wonderful set all the same (BMF). □ Reviewed by Clive Bell, Geeta Dayal, Andy Hamilton, Brian Morton and David Stubbs

downloadable MP3s to the new Feme project – a numbered edition of hand-to-order CDs (a teasing conjunction of the exclusive and the disposable) packaged in large jewel cases with the usual attractive minimalist design – in this case, the catalogue number is represented in data code in the bottom half of the cover.

The second release in the series features Italian duo *Massimo Polidori* and *Emiliano Romaniello* in *10 m* – this name is taken from a 1918 mixed media work by Marcel Duchamp in which oil and pencil designs of a bicycle wheel mingle with a bottle brush, and a sash in the canvas is held together with safety pins. A similar delight in aesthetic disjunction drives these short sonic vignettes, in which plucked and strummed acoustic guitar integrates with the quavering, bubbling miasmos of digital sound, making it difficult to tell harmonic overtones and sizzling raps apart from feedback and glitch.

The music isn't groove- or heat-driven, but builds around juddering pulsar drives, looped and loosely assembled motifs, that interface with and invade the causal instrumental patterns. On "Something Sweet In The Cache", a fingered guitar riff ripples out into odd ringing tones and pulsating synthetic textures with more than a nod to the hazy doctored ambience of John Martyn's *Echoplex* techniques. Elsewhere an ascension seems caught in unclear doo-dles of sound – flicks and pocks which fold into the mix without displacing the organic flute tones. Layer tracks develop a more restless and intense feel, calibrating in the overblown and distorted drone of "Mazzo Forte". There are even milling and rotating patterns of sound recalling Duchamp's *Rotorelief*, and yet *10 m*'s use disparity for ingenious atmospheres rather than shock.

MICHAEL WERTHMÜLLER DIE ZEIT, EINE GEBRAUCHS- ANWEISUNG

GR80 CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

The last time I heard anything of Michael Wermüller was 2002. On that occasion he was churning up a storm on *Nothing*, a concert recording by one of Peter Brötzmann's trios. In certain respects, *Die Zeit* could hardly be more different. The title plonk is aimed for chamber

ensemble plus Mark Taylor (computer) and frequent collaborator Stephen Wittner (guitar). *Die Zeit* was recorded in 2001 at the Donaueschingen Tage für Neue Musik. The full title translates as *Time, A User's Manual*, and at Donaueschingen the 15 instrumentalists need their parts from a screen on which the score was presented like a film. In terms of tempo, the parts operate independently and are, apparently, as conceived as to be almost unpredictable, the music itself is violently eruptive, and passages are fragmented by the computer and reconstructed in different ways. Much of it sounds like hugely amplified bluster.

The remaining pieces, for string quartet,

comprise two movements of a three part composition entitled *Entleibung*. The theme of this piece is disörperung (out-of-bodiness, if you prefer), and it was influenced by one of Francis Bacon's typically visceral triptychs. The first part is for the quartet alone, and on the third part Alex Baeus adds live electronics. Once again, the music is so unforgivingly complex that the players struggle through each piece, and the overpowering use of electronics makes any subtlety that may exist in Wermüller's string writing. To cap it all, the unsympathetic recording of both *Die Zeit* and *Entleibung* does no one any favours.

WILCO A GHOST IS BORN

NONNUSCH CD

BY DAVID STURM

2002's *Yerkena Hotel* *Faxom* was initially rejected by Wilco's overlords at ADL/Time Warner, who refused to release it on the grounds that it was a "career ender". It eventually emerged via ADL's more lenient outlet Nonnus. That album exhibited strong hints of an auteuristic sensibility, not least thanks to producer Jim O'Rourke, who so agitated the major label encounters. Great as it was, however, there were times when its improbable elements of electronica felt soldered onto Wilco's ostensibly All Country sound, rather than fully integrated within it.

With *A Ghost Is Born*, however, Jeff Tweedy's group have evolved all rather. Again, Jim O'Rourke co-produces, as well as playing a

discreet role within the group. It's not that Wilco have abandoned rock in favour of the abstract, although on one 15 minute excursion in particular here, you'd be forgiven for thinking they had. Rather, as the title states, a ghost is indeed born here – the ghost of American rock 'n' roll itself. Although the flavours and inflections of US rock are discernible in the grain of the sound – banjos, pianos, remote gas stations, Jim Beam on the breath – such elements are illusory, physically long-vented. Musically and lyrically, *A Ghost* is them is translucent, weightless, supernatural, capable of drifting back and forth across rock 'n' roll's sonic states at will.

"It's good in life was to be an echo," sings Tweedy on "Hummingbird", and this album is full of echoes. "I'm not at Least That's What You Said", Tweedy's brusied love song is at odds with the pyrotechnical bursts of his guitar, whose unenclosed frenzy is reminiscent of Neil Young's late rages with Crazy Horse, babbling like a psychotic stage diva independent of its "master".

Their ostensible All Country soundlessness of "Hell Is Chrome" is again subtly belied by the supineous tools it leaves in its wake, and a lyrics in which Tweedy markedly makes a caustic part with a "cancer" Satan. Is this a comment on his dabblings in the avant-garde, or the temptations and handshakes of corporate rock?

"Invisible Thinking" arises into being from a difficult guitar concerto birth before taking relatively conventional shape, while "Theologians", although it's barbed and mythical lyrics yeilds the album's title, is a deeply ethereal fragment of guitarsong. It hardly prepares you for the album's two most radical and ringing outbursts. The 11 minute "Species (Kodamae)" is a motoric, prototypical venture down the extended screen of rock 'n' roll history that Knobrook built, punctuated with violent, thundershaken bursts of guitar spray courtesy of Tweedy. It's where Wilco feel least "ghosty", immediately most fully and physically themselves, going where they want to go. The 15 minute "Less Than You Think", meanwhile, features the most conspicuous input from O'Rourke, leading the group in a coalition of "Hobos, Elvers and synths". Embroided without rock flesh or bone, it's an unsettlingly steady accretion of drones, a

abstract croaks and what could be poltergeist recordings – like being slowly consumed by the anxiety and omnious stillness of the night. It's not the most extreme or unprecedented such sonic excursion but in the context of this album, it's both testing and telling.

YULDUD BILMADIM

BY HERZ CO

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Yulduz Ursenova is a Central Asian pop sensation with album sales in the millions. The updated take on Uzbekistan folk songs that brought her this success also caught the attention of Jen Welnick, who, naturally encouraged, has both produced this album and released it on his own 3D Herz label. Uzbekistan has a proud folk music tradition developed among the horse herding communities, not to mention a distinctness of local chamanism. As a graduate of the Dushanbe Music Conservatorium in the capital Tashkent, Yulduz can ink these traditions down with a graceful ease and facility.

Jen Welnick's trademark base playing is complemented by the guitar of reggae session stalwart Ernest Ranglin. The contribution is compelling in its own right and provides a loosely titled, little limbed context for Yulduz's vocals, almost all performed in her native language. Openly "Daryab" ("Wait For The Moon") is typical, traditional string instruments are joined by Welnick's sublimely snarly, while Ranglin alternates between lengthy passages of quiet longing and flights of passage infected intensity. Welnick and Ranglin's clear pleasure playing together is most on evidence on "Bilmadim Dub", while "Ketnayil Dub" also stands out.

Welnick's house was to liberate Yulduz from previously unappreciated Western production effects. This he has admirably achieved though his use of reggae influences. The exception is "Kes Mi", the only English language track on the album. This combines a nursery rhyme melody with a lyric that proclaims "I may not speak English, but I know my rights", which is sung with a maniacal decisiveness that quickly cracks. Clearly destined to be a single, even remixes by Bill Laswell and Philip Verge can't raise the appeal of the song beyond that of kitsch cult. □

Label Lore

No: 095 Commune-disc

Address

4-26 13 Jingumae-Minami, Chiyoda City,
Tokyo, Japan
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No official Website

Rus by
Yasuharu Suzuki

Distribution

Releases available from
www.starta.com/stora2.html and
www.onetomusic.com

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Brief History

Founded in 1998 by Yasuharu Suzuki, INDrustri and Maniyama in Tokyo. In 2000 Hiroko Kowage (aka kogure) joined the crew INDrustri and Maniyama left in 2001. As a drama student in

my early twenties, I visited Europe. In Bulgaria, I joined a spontaneous party. The DJ equipment was only a Walkman and cassette recorder, but the atmosphere was really comfortable and I was moved by the people's positive response. Back to Tokyo, I started an event to enjoy music with my friends. We handled out CD-Rs and tapes of our music. It was the start of Commune disc. Since then we have built up a large catalogue and hosted box/gallery events such as Go Live and Empathymade

Statement of Intent

Music made experimental electronics,
electromechanical to unclassified tones,
structured/non-structured or improvised/non-improvised. Making the best use of the
"quiddered of CD-R", Commune releases works
which condense musical phenomena and
accidental sound around us in our daily life

Compared to CDs, CD-Rs can get to listeners faster, because it takes less time to become a "product". IIMU is a sub-label focusing on the 20 minutes of 3" CD-Rs. By putting time restrictions on artists, I'd like them to rethink time. It is an experiment within restriction

Future plans

Yasuharu compilation, Masashi Ayama minimalist guitar, Nengenpo (yu-Burzhi) solo project, who plays close attention to the entire process involved in the simple work of playing CDs on the CD-R. New electronic artist playing click and MicroHouse

Choice cuts

Hiroko Kowage "Proletariat Blues" CD-R
Ami Cut 3" CD

Info & manifesto: yulduz.suzuki

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Nick Southgate

CINELUX

PARDON MY FRENCH
PRESENTS CINELUX

PETER HIRMING CO

Pardon My French is designed to introduce French acts to a wider audience, combining original recordings with remixes to provide this overview. Cinelux are a trio, Laurent Philippot (aka Lauph) (drums), while Christian Baguiau (aka Sunstrum) and Yann Lesueur (aka Testostende) shift between bass, guitar and keyboards in trademark post-rock fashion. The Cinelux twist, as the pseudonyms below comes from their compulsive reformatioin, sampling their own playing to produce their own breakdowns and backtracks. Their five self-produced tracks are consequently more richly inflected than others' remixes and tend towards a spacey and litte post-rock akin to Fridge. The remixes iron out the musicians' idiosyncrasies in favour of pure beat; for example Machinedrum's reworking of "Holes" sheds the original's safety seeking rhythmic structure, while Cinelux craft from their own samples. Remixes from Capitol K, Wipp, Mitchell, "Swollenhead" Akiyama, Toma and Jean complete this introductory survey.

THE EXCITING TRIO

IN CHICAGO THERE IS WILLY
(DOCUMENT CHICAGO #6)

482 MUSIC CO

The Document Chicago Series was started by 482 Music to capture the new music emerging from the ever greater entanglement of Chicago's well-established free jazz scene and non-jazz players. The Exciting Trio comprises drummer Dave Rovinsky (of The Jesus Lizard), bassist Griffin Rodriguez (Babylon, HM) and guitarist Matt Schneider. Their great artistry and sympathy between the players on the engrossing shuffle of a track like "All A Piece", or the cool introspection of "Sauvage", while Schneider uses various rock guitar tricks with volume and tone to extend his own traditional jazz playing. Electronics and melody are employed on "Greene On Like Corner", the track on which The Exciting Trio go closest to riding the currents of post-rock that have run through Chicago's music scene so freely in the last decade. Given the players' other interests, much of Chicago There Is Willy is surprisingly restrained jazz playing, although when the ensemble do experiment the results are never less than intriguing.

DOUG HILSINGER WITH CAROLEEN BEATTY TAKING TIGER MOUNTAIN BY STRATEGY

DEW WORKS CO

Imitating being the sincerest form of flattery, one should not be surprised to find Brian Eno verging on the sentimental in his kleenoses to this note-by-note and track-by-track remake of his 1974 album. I don't often listen to my own records after they're finished, but hearing this one as though someone else's ears and mind had a powerful effect on me. I thought "How sweet! How touching! How sympathetically

done!" And actually... they aren't bad songs after all! Eno's assessment is partly accurate. Hilsinger and Beatty's love of the original album is infectious. It is like hearing a passionate believer proselytise every word of it with such wild-eyed conviction that you're obliged to reconsider the creed predicated. The production is a self-confessed recreation, born of the desire to have made the original, not to improve on it. It is a double success, being both an act of love and renewing your interest in Eno's original recordings.

BILL HORIST

LYRIC/SUITE

ACCRETIONS CO

Lyric/Suite is a collection of tracks originally designed to accompany a dance piece conceived by choreographer Dovida Monik from Jim Zwick's work *Lyric Philosophy*, itself an exploration of the non-rational processes involved in artistic creation. Such a collaboration is familiar territory for Horist, whose previous work *Poro Ubu*-inspired group Phryne Gage employed elements of vaudeville and circus performance in their stage act. Alone, Horist falls back on his radically extended guitar technique to produce a collection of abrupt sound essays. Despite being composed and performed by solo guitar, a piece like "Seasons", with its sweeping electronic cut-offs and swooping bowed parangas has the impact of a far larger ensemble. Elsewhere, there are gentle swells of grandeur and sombre apposé ("Notes") shimmering, moan-Resonator slabs ("Cadence") and minimalist percussive gliss ("My By Hand").

THURSTON MOORE/ MY CAT IS AN ALIEN FROM THE EARTH TO THE SPHERES VOL 1

OPAW UP

This is the first in a projected series of split LPs from Opaw, a label run by My Cat Is An Alien's internal co-conspirators Maurizio and Roberto Gennai. Each release in the series will be an exceptionally limited edition vinyl LP featuring "hand painted artwork on a wood support". Via various tour support slots, the brothers have leveraged their artistry as Sonic Youth's chosen representatives in Italy to persuade Thurston Moore to contribute to this first volume, guaranteeing an unseemly scramble among Sonic Youth completists for the 100 copies pressed up. Moon's piece, entitled "American Coffin", is an unprepossessing and lengthy assault on the higher register of a piano that segues into a beatbox-driven found sound collage. My Cat Is An Alien make full use of these side of the LP with "In The Dark", "In The Outer Space", chirping space rock ambience unfurling with the Technicolor opulence of a galactic special effect in a low-budget sci-fi movie.

THE NEW YEAR THE END IS NEAR

TOUCH & GO CO

Those who lament the passing of slavecore pioneer Bedhead will delight at the return of

brothers Matt and Bubba Kadene with their second album under the epochal and millennial banner of The New Year. Torpor has been coded here by lazier and gentler default hang-ups in the art, as each motif of disappoiment catch the sunshine's last, illuminating glow. These are songs about lost opportunities and second starts, for example the self-explanatory "Plan B" that opines, "This isn't breaking my back, just my spirit". The pessimism doesn't fit in other tracks, such as the bleak "Sinking Ship", the bleaker "Desire" or the self-pitying "Stranger To Kindness", but finds its perfect place in the chords that walk deftly handshaking shoulders through each song, their greats flapping behind and faces buried in palms to hide the jaws pricking the corners of their eyes. The Kadenes have created a collection of songs of which they can be proud, although it seems unlikely that will make them very happy.

PAIK

SATIN BLACK

STRANGE ATTRACTORS CO

The fourth album from Detroit based power trio Paik, Satin Black unfolds over five instrumentals that progress with the remorseless energy and incandescent luminosity of a pyrotecnic fire. By turn tonally crystalline and granular, there is too much of the Detroit streetlight in this for it to be space rock. Yet despite Satin Black's dark heart, pumping with the Motor City's infernos bad boys of peyot, it is accompanied by a cerebral quest for greater thoughts and greater things. "Don For Love" starts with unfurled righteoussness, the title track broods and swallows back its irateculous desire for just revenge, while "Dizzy Star" slavely rocks with the compressed intensity of innocence cruelly betrayed. Onstage this incarnation of rock's minimalist musical unit is bathed in a psychedelic lightshow, a perfect metaphor for a mass caught somewhere between the mud and the stars.

THE PAPER CHASE

GOD BLESS YOUR BLACK

HEART

KILL ROCK STARS CO

The Paper Chase's John Congleton has taken the engineer's genetic presumption that everyone has had their heart broken, and he has built a bitter and wongful musical worldview from it. Against a malvolent Congleton's invention-drenched vocals veer between the merely harassed and the outright harrowing. Songs like "One Day He Went Off For Milk And Never Came Home", "You're Going To Get It", "Let's Be Bad Henry", "Let's Be Really Bad" and most transparently "Wibb, You're Going To Burn For What You've Done To Me" come from a place where the milk of human kindness curdled into a state of rankid putrefaction some time back. Vexus of the disintegration of the human condition will be able to gaze on warthores thrills to their black hearts content. Listeners of a gender disposition, however, should approach The Paper Chase with extreme caution.

PHARAOH OVERLORD THE BATTLE OF THE AXEMHAMMER (LIVE)

LAST VISIBLE DOG CO

Pharaoh Overlord are Finnish folk of few fibs but considerable effluvia. Originally recorded live in Helsinki in 2001, this is a side project for Circle's Jussi Lehtola, now finding wider distribution with a licensing deal (although inexplicably losing a track from the original Extra release). The five instrumentals are wondrously monolithic trudges through the colourless tundras of a collective (un)imaginative of Pharaoh's breeding, brutal music. As titles such as "Mountain" and "Skyline" suggest, this is a musical endeavour of uncompromising scale, seeming fine detail and monumental as is statements. The hypnotic riffing recalls Loop or a pagan marriage of the Aesopis brothers and early Can. The unyieldingly reductive approach flies its zenith, or perhaps nadir, on "Mystery Shopper".

SKILL 7 STAMINA 12

ROBOTICS WITH STRINGS

JUNIOR ASPIRIN CO

Like all great art-punk groups, not one of the members of Skill 7 Stamina 12 looks like they belong in a group. They look like IT technicians, bass room civil servants, or social workers. While the post-punk revival rages, rampant with the name love of misplaced nostalgia, Skill 7 Stamina 12 are all the more valuable. The rethematized intensity on display here creates a sense of open musical texture, particularly between Ashley Warwick's instant, cerebral percussions and Nathaniel Mallon's jazz-punk bass playing, over which Dan Fox state clean cutting guitar figures. Warwick's tendency to revert to her native Dutch in her thinly plaintive and maimed vocalizing contributes this intriguing package. Although comparisons with early 80s groups spring to mind, Robotics With Strings is intelligent and accomplished enough to find its own voice beyond the pastiche peddled in post-punk's name elsewhere.

VARIOUS

SLEEP TIGHT... UNDER A
BLANKET OF PSYCH (NO 2)

EASY SUBCULTURE CO

This extremely limited handmade compilation affords six opportunities for lo-fi pech fans and free folk acolytes alike to sleep very tightly and very soundly indeed. The opening track "Aegean Love (Seren)" from Fusasse, a Philadelphia based free folk trio headed by Tom Burke flows in the same vein as Damon & Noora, building its acoustic swell to an ineluctably overwhelming and paradoxically muted climax. Similar fan is on offer from Japanese the Phen Ngu Lee whose "Wind And Anger" is dominated by Takashi Nakasawa's violin, creating a Vilever Underground upglided mood. Japanese duo Heshipo and Philadelphia duo Planet & Beth each contribute blissful guitar groans. Heshipo favour the overblown 'wall of sound' method, while Xplenet & Bethx build their doses from gently chinking and endlessly gradually unfolding guitar arpeggios. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

AKUFEN

FABRIC 17

FABRIC CD

For anyone who didn't make it to MUTEK this year, Akufen's mix for London's Fabric club offers a wealth of evidence that Montreal has become one of the world's capitals of Techno. Included in the 21 track mix are cuts from Clockhouse, Mossa, Steve Beauford and one-time Montreal resident Jeff Milligan, as well as Mike Shannon's remix of "Surmes Tens" by Honor Inc., an alias of Akufen (Marc LoCicero) himself. These tracks burn in a net woven from similarly minimalist fan from Matthew Dear, Krikor Paronyan, Cabanne, Utsukuri, et al. Akufen's selection sums up the dialogues that link Cologne, Berlin, Jena, Paris, Montreal and Santiago as they loss over minimal Techno's pastel logorhythms form like some paper shape, adding a fold here, flattening a crease there. It's subtle butably mood, focusing sparse, skipping beats that deviate clearly. The only transition that doesn't work is from the punctuated bleeps of The Rip-Off Artist's "Little Tiny 1/8" Jack" into Señor Coconuts' "Sheek On The Water" remake. Their beats and textures are just too distinct to be awarelessness blending, and it sounds more like a digital fade than the kind of instinctive cross-cutting that marks Akufen's live productions and DJ sets.

ARK

ALLELUYAK VOL. 4
CIRCUS COMPANY 12"

MOSSA

YOU'RE LOOSING MY MIND
CIRCUS COMPANY 12"

Pans headquarters of click, Circus Company, fill out their catalogue with two strong new releases of punchy, chattering minimalist funk. Ark returns with the fourth installment of their Allluvay series, offering two new tracks of his signature lurch and skip. "Ded-Au-Lent" is anchored by Ark's staple, a瑰ously four-to-the-floor bass bung, and embellished by vocal samples and blank and you'll miss 'em' keyboard samples, interrupted by cinematic strings and loose wasted drum fills. "Hed" takes a more traditional French House approach, like a flat daze run through a paper shredder. This will Calypso round out the EP with a pair of remixes that are equal parts funk and kerplunk. Meanwhile, Montreal's Mossa, fresh from cutting a single for Mike Shannon's Cynosure label, joins Circus Company from across the pond with a four track EP that draws from both the driving board snap of Shannon and the crosscut slaps of Akufen. A marksmanship, not in terms of sound quality but melodic development, keeps Mossa's tracks feeling like coiled springs that can't quite figure out how to release their energy. But you can tell, as in the churning vocal loops on "Down Home Funk" and "Braz997", that they're stoking up potential for the big bang.

BECKETT & TAYLOR/SPANDEX LIES
HAND ON THE PLOW 12"

Just a few months after releasing the startling debut single on their Hand On The Plow imprint,

Lasse Beckett and Steve Taylor return with two new tracks plus two from new HOP signing Spandex. Beckett and Taylor's "Lies" and their remix "Men Lies" share the chunky clattering patterns of their debut, but where that record imagined Chicago House in the shape of a sharecropper's lament, born by the rake's blades, the new tunes raise any obvious relevance point. A faintly misaligned vocalist holds centre stage in a seemingly empty theatre, the barking sounds like it's been sourced from tumbling piles of folding chairs and an orchestra noisyly clacking its instrument cases closed. Spandex plays it marginally straighter, but his two tracks, shaped with abandon and studded with hair-trigger beats on the riser, still pass the idea of House music to its brittle edge, dropping off little pieces and letting them fall where they may. "Housing The Body" is an attack on the corpus of poor music itself; barely recognizable bits of a Hall & Oates sample splatter about like the fatty morsels of Mattozo's spending room.

TROY GEARY

TECHNICAL REMOTE VIEWER
BROKEN BEATS 12"

Brooklyn's Broken Beats label is best known for caustic, grrrring breakbeat releases, but on their latest 12", Troy Geary (aka DJ Slip), a veteran of labels like Drop Bass and Kontor/Reaktor) provides a rapto from the synthtop aesthetic with four tracks of sparseness, vented Techno. In contrast to the software-centric design of most contemporary minimalist techno, Geary retains a tight, machine feel, letting unadorned drum units do the talking. This is the sound of gearheads communing in the hours before the sun has begun, left to their own devices in a cavernous hanger while the DJs and crew are off filling up on dinner. Reminiscent and bell tones ring out like woodpeckers, pecking Morse code messages and trailing delay in their wake. The title track is an echo seeking distress signal for torn-torn and mouth-tap, and it sounds more than a little like late 70s Human League or British Electronic Foundation. "It's" introduces the sputtering with chattering bells and a rhythm that sounds sourced from a falling dot-matrix printer. On the B side, however, "Third Stage" and "Survive" add handclaps and rigid funk, resulting in two absolutely jolting tracks full of hyperacclerations and unexpected petaroles.

GRANNYARK

RESURGO EP
ZONA LARSON 12"

Beginning in 2001 as a Monday night speakeasy in Berlin, Zora Larson's listening and dancing sessions have kept the likes of Paul, Todd Maxx and Safety Scissors. The first EP from the label — complete with one of the most charmingly daigued covers I've seen in ages — suggests this stylistic exuberance without ever resorting to lowest common denominator "electrotechno". Granny Ark is Michelle Inring, field recorder and electroacoustician, and on her four tracks here she links her whisper-thin samples into softly chugging minimal Techno tracks that send up nice plumes of exhausted haemostics.

"Home" surveys a freeway from high on a hill, rendering the landscape into streaks of colour and whooshes of elements in rolling contact. "Home Home" carries the original far into the woods where woodpeckers and windmills recreate the scene. "Gaching" offers a nokey wooden bridge arching over Pepe's yawning club chasm. After all this delicacy, it's only proper that Edgar J. Pasadena would funk up the wobbs on his "Grommy's Square Dance" remix, battering living's brushed drums and bleags with overdriven bass guitar in a diabolical disco workout that sounds a bit like what Two Lone Swamprats were aiming to do on *From The Double Gone Chapel* — but better.

PHIL PARNELL

DO YOU LIVING IN THE NIGHT
MANTIS 12"

The title track of Phil Parnell's 2002 album *Do You Living in the Night* reappears here in avenged form and also remixed by Brooks, Parnell's labelmate, Mantis, and Matthew Heron, in whose duo Parnell has long played keyboards. Parnell's version dangles Lilian Heron's spookey vocals just out of reach, whipping them to and fro across the stereo spectrum, and distract the listener with little flashes of keyboards, cirrus organ pumping and static machine splices of percussive. He's quite the tease. In his *Rank Isaacs' Nia*, Andy Bocka seems to be exorcising some kind of demons, though whether from the track, his machines, or his own head is unclear. Beaton's words are even stronger here, spiced and frenzied, and the drum machines take on the start-stop quality of the dumb water in a haunted house, all whining gears and eerie croaking. Heron turns in two mixes, one "Light," one "Dark." The latter bounces along propelled by pulsating organs and tumbling snare fills. If the former looks towards light, it operates like a kind of inferno, insuring its leaves in anticipation of the day.

UNDO & VICKNOISE

HAPPY MONDAY EP
FACIONY CITY 12"

The second EP from Undo & Vicknoise, proprietors of the Factor City label and residents of Barcelona's Loft club, counts the duo firmly in theirself to Schaffel, the lumbering, triplet nodded form that emerged from Cologne and its Kompakt label. Kompakt may want to shield the genre from type (although if you release a compilation called Schaffeltechno/ Skuffe Fever, can they really be an anti-type?), but the two Schaffel tocols here show that the form continues to popularize itself. In Undo & Vicknoise's hands, it's melancholy stuff, driven by rough analogues baselines and dressed up in sentimental synthesizer melodies. Barcelona's DJs have always been 80s fans, and it shows here in the doocost, Depeche Modish feel of "Happy Monday" and "The Sperm"; alike. A third out, "Welcome," is even more indebted to synthpop (as well as Kompakt), with a sprangy Basque reminiscence of Heiko Wiss's "I Think About You," with the fusion of clashing drums and passive synthesizers heralding the moment

of the comodown — a familiar moment, in a city that regularly rows well past dawn.

VARIOUS

DET UND.01

DETROIT UNDERGROUND 12"

VARIOUS

DET UND.02

DETROIT UNDERGROUND 12"

Ambitious software makers, perhaps recognizing how brands like Zildjian and Meshuggah integrated themselves into the iconography of rock music, are increasingly investing their logos into the splattered pixel designs of electronic music releases. Native Instruments are at the forefront of this marketing juggernaut, first with co-releases with Germany's Source Records, and now we a series of 12"s from the Detroit Underground series. Rather than USP-ed militant Techno, the first two singles, sloshed in exploding vector designs, showcase the glocken sounds of code warriors like Richard Devine, Kino and Mode Selector. The common thread among all the artists featured here is a sound that unearths, lays and constantly renew its filaments. The palette consists of a thousand shades of white noise in dense, percussive clusters. But all the artists involved approach their bit-blasting with more intention to form than was apparent in circuit-centric IDM of recent years, so that the rhythmic signatures of Techno, electro and Hip-Hop make themselves heard behind the sum of bytes — like gravitational fields remixed pixel by pixel.

DANIEL WANG

BERLIN SUNRISE

CHORTON INTERNATIONAL 12"

ItaloDisco is back in vogue, leaving me in a neophyte pallor once again. As a 33 year old native German, the game was never a part of my musical education until artists like Meto Aea and F-Popularized it as a Techno anecdote. Daniel Wang has been busy excavating Hordaland's analogic foundations for more than ten years, so I suppose I had no excuse. But while there's a pleasure from digging into the back catalogues of artists I've discovered through people like the Morgan Geist or The Wiper's Peter Shapiro, there's an altogether different kind of pleasure in a recent like Wang's "Berlin Sunrise," it's for its lucid glide, always sounds someone's insight — it's a sound of wires twanging and speakers quivering before strange new square waves. But Wang, while he mimics the firm arpeggios and probing bounces of his mentors, infuses them with a glee, an assertiveness and a confidence that's somehow lacking in much original Italo. At the time, we were at Wang. After enough lazy repetitions, you long for something tougher than the laid-back bass cycles of "Pulso Doloroso (Mehr Acid Mail)." But there's a comfort there too, a languid pace that maintains itself no matter how many electronic tons lather their way through the beats. The side track adds its arpeggios and counterpart basslines so gracefully, it could be a court performance. □

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

BUTCH CASSIDY SOUND SYSTEM

HEAR WHAT I SAY EP

NETFLIX CD

Only encountered in this column on compilations to date, Butch Cassidy Sound System is Glasgow's Mad Hurter. Although the idea of a remi of junior Byrds' classic Rasta confectionary 'Tin Man' ("Tin Man" might not automatically trigger multiple flashbacks, this joint is pure worm joy right from the one drop. Previously with cuttings under the unwise guise of 'Pabu' to the Good Looking and Guidance labels as well as his own Red Hook, this single prefaces the inauspicious titled album debut, Butches Brew.

As no other musicians are credited, one can only assume this is a one-man effort. If so this is in the Twilight Circus league of modern dub existence and there can be no higher recommendation than that. A beatless version of the title track seems obvious only after hearing it, but the jerker beats of "Pabu" have a more unfortunate feel of the increasingly oppressive new orthodoxy of wacky drum patterns.

MIKEY DREAD AFRICAN ANTHEM

NETFLIX CD

Chances are you will be familiar with parts of the album even though you may never have heard it, for the midle stings and jingles that link the dub and instruclips have been shamelessly plundered by countless dance ads since before sampling began. Michael Dread

Campbell's firm stances on his revolutionary input from the time he was employed as a mode DJ by Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation to fill in the dead airtime after midnight. Little did the management know he would have the sheer neck to play reggae tunes back to back on his Dread At The Controls show. By the time they realised what was going on, Campbell was an overnight musical phenomenon supported in his righteous mission by the sales of the produced's products and artists. It didn't stop him getting the sack, though. This is his second, and most celebrated album, released first in the UK with the radio links blended into the mix by English comedian Dee Huxley (taken exclusively there are three or four great tunes, but taken as one long, celebratory segue this is one great reggae album and must rank high in the top ten 'must have' dub sets. Even more so for the bunch of contemporaneous dubs cuts included, among them the well drum dub to Welly Becker's "Raggamuffin Style", drenched in dairy Milkay want on to issue some fine sides on his own DRTC imprint and record some killer tunes for On-U Sound, but this, available again at last, is the one he will be remembered for.

MANASSEH

DUB PLATE STYLE VOL 2

HAMMERHEADS CD

A quick comeback for Manasseh, the exemplar of modern roots, after sharing last year's "Step Like Pepper" with The Equalizer. And, to paraphrase a Prince Lincoln Thompson tune, it's dub club. Even more so for the bunch of contemporaneous dubs cuts included, among them the well drum dub to Welly Becker's "Raggamuffin Style", drenched in dairy Milkay want on to issue some fine sides on his own DRTC imprint and record some killer tunes for On-U Sound, but this, available again at last, is the one he will be remembered for.

GRIEVOUS ANGEL VS

NINEY THE OBSERVER

BLOOD AND FIRE (TWIST-UP JUNGLE MIX)

RENU MUSIC CD

Who cares whether the Grievous Angel actually issues vinyl or whether the label designs on his

old Shards, Fragments & Totems blog are solely virtual? Stylistically related to Ray Herford's Small Ape People in his unashamed approach to source and third source, the Grievous Angel Sound System mangles and mashes the slim precedents of two step/Garage/R&B/whatever back into the deeper rods of Niney and Scratch's special chart. The result is a kinetic shower of blues to Babylon's head. There's a whole site full of such whimsical experimentation to be found on his relocated spot at grievousangel.net

KING TUBBY

KING TUBBY IN FINE STYLE

TRIUMN CD

Showcasing Tubby's collaborations with foundation producers Rupe Edwards, Denek Harriet, Vinnie "Bunny" Jackie, Winston Riley, Keith Hudson, Burnie Lee, Augustus Pablo, Prince Farley and Winston "Niney the Observer" Holness, this double set can be kindly interpreted as an attempt at one part of the definitive six CD set to document the legacy of the great sound man.

Working from a small four-track home studio in the tough Wethersfield ward of West Kingston, Tubby preferred jazz to reggae and flangy to engineering a session. Most of the tunes brought to him for mixing and dubbing he regarded as "jerk". Yet many of the end products are only just now being recognised as sonic revelations which would exert a profound impact on the development of modern dance and other genres of contemporary music. The essential missing bits are of course Gun Brown, Carlton Patterson, Sugar Minott, Harry Meade and Jimmy Reid (for whom Tubby provided his most consistent and revolutionary work), plus the once largely ignored dip-panted at Firehouse. Containing a mix of the well known and harder to find tracks, this set will appeal to both hardcore Tubbyphiles and those persuaded to find out that the extravagant claims made on behalf of the Dubmaster are all true.

MANASSEH

DUB PLATE STYLE VOL 2

HAMMERHEADS CD

A quick comeback for Manasseh, the exemplar of modern roots, after sharing last year's "Step Like Pepper" with The Equalizer. And, to paraphrase a Prince Lincoln Thompson tune, it's dub club. Even more so for the bunch of contemporaneous dubs cuts included, among them the well drum dub to Welly Becker's "Raggamuffin Style", drenched in dairy Milkay want on to issue some fine sides on his own DRTC imprint and record some killer tunes for On-U Sound, but this, available again at last, is the one he will be remembered for.

This set is more of a return to the classic vocal or instrumental followed by its own version, while its forerunner was packaged as a showcase for the variety styles within the producer's grasp. If proof were needed of Manasseh's clear superiority, then his insight for the acoustically bussed "Western World Version", a dub to Spilly T's "Paper Soldier" 12" that pugres a jazz based percussion bed with fast and dirty wail-wails. Guests on this trip though Manasseh's well spun dubplate crates are veteran Denry Red or the digitized major pump "Don Gorgan", Earl 16 on the passionately fluent "Xoxi Oxy", and the up and long time coming Brother Culture, who's almost cubed off the disc on "Challenging

Verses", "Science Pt 2", meanwhile, is one of those incessantly driving tunes that can only exist in reggae, where the synth horns are in the sweetest tension with the urgency of the rhythm

OVERPROOF SOUND SYSTEM

NOTHING TO PROVE

DIFFERENT DRUMMER CD

This is the debut from Overproof Sounds, a Jah Grizly and Stallion offshoot from Birmingham's G Corp, who with vocalists Ras MC T-Weed and Dajha have been busy on a non-stop Euro connoisseur tour. Their first single, "Watch What You Put In Me" (a plex for quafly controlled split/gap), opens this set with a jump-up moment that's delivered in the remandora with a largely drum 'n' bass/dancehall accented affection. Kenyal Booth (one of the great reggae crooners Ken Booth) appears on "Run It Up Right". Ultimately a largely vocal reggae album demands a few great tunes, but even with the impassioned vocals and acappellaled technique this is mostly flat, despite the Alcapone impression on "Get With It" and Chesire Cat's late appearance on "The Herbs". Top track turns out to be a polite version of Mad Professor's "Kunta Kinte", but of mysteriously vague provenance.

AUGUSTUS PABLO

THE DEFINITIVE AUGUSTUS PABLO

ROCKERS CD

Despite being as highly recommended, this retrospective set suffers similarly to the Tubby set reviewed above. Any attempt to chronicle the work of Augustus Pablo in a compilation set wishing to claim definitive status would have to to tow further than Pablo's own Roots label – at least pulling in Chie Chie and Herman Chin Loy productions. Also there is a balance and selection issue here. With the Rockers catalogue open for plunder, why are great works from Paul Blackman, Junie Dalgado, The Hepstones, Yanni Boles and others as conspicuously missing?

However, the awesome line-up of deeply spiritual and heartfelt tunes here melts all such criticism away. Direct from the Black Ark comes a rare outing for "Silent Sister", there's the bittersweet step-lucky dub "New Style" and "Insider Clap", the clearest out to the rhythm better known as Dr Alimahabib's "Best Dressed Chicken in Town". These plus the ultra-soulous claim that is "Ras Menlik Harp", stand out here. Two hours and more of absolutely guaranteed bliss.

DI SPOOKY VS TWILIGHT CIRCUS DUB SOUND SYSTEM

RIDDIM CLASH

PLAY CD

Ryan Moore comes to Spooky's rescue and pulls him back from the dreadful abyss that was his dalliance with Search and Mad Professor in combination style, launching into this more deeply cultural excursion. A couple of harmless doodles open up the set before the serious business begins with the appearance of "Dust Storm On NYC 7023", which has clearly gone missing from the soundtrack of the yet to be

made 3D version of Frank Marben's Done.

Title track "Riddim Clash – Heavyweight Style" opens with a lyrical hub flitting into etsatz gemello before bursting into the tellingly pastoosa unheard since those early 80s "Tashkeed" 12" monsters, of thundering persuasion and stabbing synth that only lurches back into the foliage after a full four minutes. "Phase Aaines" is vintage Super Ape Scratch material complete with wacky whistle and Reginald Dwan Wurlitzer; "Interruption" reprises a steeler gemello before Mammon-style stabs herald the entrance of "Dub Cultivation".

Good to hear Spooky once again reaching the heights of his seminal "Galactic Funk" and Ryan Moore heading in brave new multiple directions.

VARIOUS

HITEK BY METEOSOUND

METEOSOUND CD

A dub aesthetic always informs the decisions of the A&R department of Berlin's finest electro-dance label, although these are tecno and HipHop styles present here also. Dobry's maddeningly persistent signature kickbeat on "Magic Eyes" is only broken by brief regga-style MC interactions and an occasional keyboard bwin, while Rithm's remix on Compton's "8 Eyes" is clear conductor for ultimate amiglo-punk of the year. As Bus, Metzo and Treel introduce the most favoured East 16 to voice "Simple Way", and old friend The Rootsman also guests with "My World Is Smiling", his startling single from last year featuring Horace Andy. There's an Appiah remix from Mondale and old time friend connections via Sun Electric, The City allow their "Green Glitter" to be saved as a dub mix from Rhythmix. A freestyle selection of future classics all masterfully done by Stefan Bette.

VARIOUS

SUCKER PUNCH: JAMAICAN BOXING TRIBUTES

TRICIA CD

At last the Ijanaq concept team hits a paydirt one two. The links between reggae and the former sport of real kings have always been strong, from experienced pragmatist Prince Buster's shout to Al Fraser or "Suckeroos On Orange Street" through to Cornell Campbell's roughest outing, "Boxing", but for Joe Gibbs, The regard is mutual. As he strides out to face Mike Tyson, Lorraine Lewis rodes nimbly straight into the ring, while the UK's ex-World Middleweight champ Nigel Biggs had a well known habitat of Daddy Kool's reggae emporium in London's Salt. Even though there's no room in the ring for Bobby Kaljinha's "Countess Punch", this selection gets a unanimous decision for the inclusion of Big Youth on Burning Spear's "Joe Frazier/Holy Fayed" rhythm with "Big Fight". Supercharged A is represented by Charlie Arie, Trinity, Devina Alcapone and Derrick Morgan, and the great Lee Lewis by the Dynamics. The whole package is rounded off with notes from former undisputed world heavyweight champion turned reggae anthropologist Lloyd "Raggamuffin" Honeyghan. □

Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

FRANK BRETSCHNEIDER

LOOPING HIV (AND OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS)

12X CD

An artist as prolific as Raster-Noton's Frank Bretschneider must have some kind of system in place for determining where to take new recordings. His never been content with just putting material out on his own label — the last decade or so has seen him delivering music to Mille Plateaux, Audio NL, Faitk and Bip Hop, as well as developing a budding relationship on the other side of the Atlantic with Taylor Deupree's eminently testy 12k Label, which released a previous Bretschneider solo outing, *Rausch*, back in 2000.

The title of this latest collection suggests a music that combines abstract rigour and emotional expressiveness, and *Looping HIV* delivers exactly that. The 12 tracks are woven seamlessly together to produce a subtle, endlessly modulating procession of silvery, seductive detail. Occasionally, Bretschneider's glittering digital pulses thicken into something approaching rhythmic urgency — "Looping HIV" has an almost Latin twit — but the sleepy, Clusterish drums of "Robot Summer" and the sparse, cool twinkles of "Night Broadcast" are more representative. Overall, the effect is one of unobtrusive yet highly involving alchemy.

EZEKIEL HONIG

PEOPLE PLACES AND THINGS

SINGLE CD, MUSIC CO.

Ezekiel Honig started out as a drum 'n' bass DJ in his native New York, and although as with last year's *Technology Is Lonely*, the title of his second album reveals a sentimental touch of the old day's overblown inclusiveness, his music has clearly moved on. Opener "Passing Through" hints at an oceanic sweep, its soft, 4/4 heartbeat pushing it towards the wide open dreamscapes conjured up by the likes of Mike Ink and Marcus Guarneri. However, any epithetions we had ready hit check — sideways though the metric is, it retains an astringent sparseness.

Later, tracks like "More Human Than Human" and "Winter Spring" pulse with any poise, and if their occasional percussive synapse glances back towards Honig's breakbeat roots, the overall effect is one of warmth, spacious states only infrequently disrupted by surprising some events like the hand-panned percussions in "Green Tea". Although *People Places And Things* is by and large an unadorned record, it's also a beguiling one.

LULLATONE

LITTLE SONGS ABOUT RAINDROPS

PLP CO

The Tokyo based label PLP specialises in releases that major on winsome, almost neoclassical timeliness, and although Lullatone is a recent recruit to the roster, he clearly fits right in. Shawn James Seymour, an American based in Nagoya, has released two previous albums as Lullatone (Computer Recital on Audio

Deja and My Pet Melodies on Childsplay label) and both were notable for their ability to build sweetly complex compositions from that simplest of sonic sources, the anechoic. For his third release, Lullatone has widened his sound palette, but his methodology is largely unaltered. Rather than relying on the native tones of the anechoic, he explores instead the native tones of six instruments, combining the reedy, auraluesque shimmers of glockenspiels and miniature pianos into fragile, pianistic networks of melody. Lullatone clearly intends to convey an air of childlike wonder and for the most part he's relatively successful, particularly when joined by slightly richer timbres of ukulele (on "Leaves Falling") and viola ("Puddles On The Hayground"), but the sustained need of diddly innocence does become slightly cloying.

MONDOMARC

SAU RA

KLANGWERK CD

Mondomarc is Marc Denevich Victoria Seusa, born in Spain but resident in Berlin since the late 1980s. This is his first album, but it feels like a continuation of his work with the group Mondo Furniture, whose droll, cheerfully clever and periodically inspired music fusing anything it could lay its hands on to a sampler and reassembled the parts with haphazard elation. It's not entirely clear why this is a solo project, as Mondo Furniture's other principal member Gavina also contributes vocals here, and the serendipitous mood is much the same. This孤獨, wildly various music is unlikely to appeal to Mille Plateaux or Mego fans, as it's track like "Papertower", with its disco propulsion, evocative bottleneck guitar and distorted vocals quickly demonstrates.

However, it's a slightly artless way, much of Sau Ra is as daring as anything assembled by electronica's more minimal, austere practitioners: "Restbeats", for example, occupies shadowy ground somewhere between Dreyf Mind-era Prince and contemporary two-step, and still manage to throw a harmonica part into the mix. Elsewhere, the welcome presence of guest rapper Ladyboy on a couple of tracks neatly highlights some surprisingly assertive rhythm programming. As long as you can forgive the occasional need in the direction of Alabama 3, Sau Ra is an appealing collection.

MOON

DREAM

FENCING FLATWORM CD

The Leeds microlabel Fencing Flatworm are offering a welcome gateway to the French 'ne audience' CD-R underground (here, please, not mine) thanks to an ongoing link with their counterparts at Boring Electronics across the channel, which just happens to be run by Moon Dream is thus their first UK release — as much as "release" is the right word for the assemblee FF limited edition CD-R echo — and it's a veritable kaleidoscope of swirling analogue synth textures and heavily treated guitar tones. As titles like "Oblition" and "There's Little Evidence Of Intelligent Lifeforms On Planet Earth" suggest, it's

unashamedly spacey stuff — but not unadorned by touches of deft musicianship like the jagged, cross-grained slashes of guitar that slice through "The Quakie Diver" or the swelling, buoyant drives of "Specchiozzi". Listeners with a taste for the minimal will find the endless Berliner bubbles of the title track would take "One Two Three Venus" absolutely inflating, but these of a more, uh, relaxed cast of mind will sit back with a contented smile to enjoy the trip.

PUPPYHERTZ

ANIMAL SQUAD

MONUMENTAL CD

More flickerbeat HipHop for the attention deficit disorder generation — but unlike much of the collaged sampleolla out there, which majors on dazing disruption and a general sense of fractured informatics, Animal Squad is associated with smoothness, wry humor and plenty of seventies charm. It's the debut release from the Tasman based producer Scott Camm, a man who has clearly spent plenty of time rotting stink staves for source material. Refreshingly, however, his printed snippets are neatly recontextualised rather than simply deployed for maximum cheapy impact. The sensation of genuine musicality is heightened by Camm's assured base playing which brings warmth, spreading life to a track like "Wiggle", molding the disparate shards of sound into a convincing whole. Elsewhere, there's plenty of sonic shapeshifting, "Cookies & Cream" comes a sunny, phone-ish electronic melody with shimmering static, 90s radio announcements and snatches of gospel organ, while "Gems Petal" opens with a frenetic succession of scratchy fragments before settling down to a lurching procession of B-boy beats wedged to bouncy drums and shimmering vintage keyboards. The regular flowing ratiocin of come fine and see if that's an appreciation of Pharell Williams and Nicole Kidman, too. In all, this is a genuinely promising first record, and Camm could well be one to watch.

MARTIN SIEWERT

NO NEED TO BE LONESOME

MOSC CD

The second release on the fledgling, Magdeburg-based Mosc label is the first solo record by the Vienna based Martin Siewert, who combines a career as a sound designer for theatre, film and installation pieces with membership of Texast (Finn Jolley) and DING (Cheshire). Slightly surprisingly, given Siewert's preoccupation with extensively treated guitars and the emphasis on abstraction, improvisation and texture, which characterises the other projects he's involved with, *No Need To Be Lonesome* is actually a highly approachable record. Here, he's able to extract an interest in groove and melody that has long largely dominated so far. He does so with a certain amount of deliberation, however — the five songs that make up the album take up a full hour of listening time, and the mammoth, central title track weighs in at no less than 18 minutes 45 seconds. Still, it is an absolute beller, fully justifying its dimensions, opening with

harmonically dense, gloriously overdriven, sumptuous analogue chords before subsiding to soft strains and gradually working, through endless shifts of emphasis and instrumentation, back up towards that initial exultant richness. No doubt any passing melodic resemblance to Animalia-era Floyd exists in my imagination rather than Siewert's.

SINIAALTO

TALLENTUMIA

IF SOCIETY CD

There aren't too many people who would argue that there is an alarming lack of Tangier Dream records, but three of them seem to have come together in Helsinki with the intention of setting right just such a perceived shortage. Sinealto was founded in 2002 by Iai Raima, Ikuu Mihtranta and Tuomas Miettinen and on the evidence of *Jaakoma*, their second album, they combine a profound interest in the analogue synthesizers of the mid-70s with an equally profound affection for the instrumental art of the same era. The album consists of six strong out quasi-Ambient explorations, recorded in the best Prog tradition, live in Finland between May 2003 and January 2004. Varying in length from a mere ten minutes to an altogether more fully formed 16, these pieces are actually a real joy, despite their unashamedly retro inspiration, their cosmic tendrils unfurling with exactly the right balance of portentousness, spacey stealth and sonorous abandon.

ULTRA MILKMAIDS

POP PRESSING

ART ZEN CO

French brothers Yann and Rodolphe Jaffel have been exploring their musical influences as Ultra Milkmaids for much of the last ten years. They started out on a punky/ethno combo in company with a third brother, Olivier, but after encountering early post-rock and Industrial recordings by the likes of Moonshake and Coil, they modified their own approach to reflect these new sources of inspiration. The comprehensive links page on their Website indicates that they remain active, questing listeners, and the assured, playful and distinctive contents of *Pop Pressing* clearly indicate the suspend, moving from fractured, digitally processed and suggestive fragments to more fully formed, organic pieces of music with easy assurance. Despite being burdened with an incomprehensible if not downright ridiculous title, "My Electric Laddie Land" (Coil) is a magical, long-held exhalation of sound encompassing sustained shimmer and searing environmental snippets in its gentle ascent. Just as badly named, "Pop Star" emerges from a haze of manum, taking shape as a dappled spectral shiver reminiscent of early Lubabob. "My Proposal TV System" admits the instant pulse of conventional percussion for the first time and revives gently around soft hum chords. In all, *Pop Pressing* is a convincing collection of ethereal meanderings that demonstrates that persistence and purity of motivation can pay off in the end. □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

BEANS

NOW SOON SOMEDAY

WEAP CD

Beans was always the most ferociously amorous of Rap-Pop Consumerism's MCs. The Afro-futurist mind-set in which APC were steeped might have found its most intense advocate in Beans, but he was always the member most resistant to the underground elation that kept APC a left-field proposition. It's clear that this man wants more than backslaps from the back-packing brigades. From the neck down he looks like Isaac Hayes, from the neck down he looks like a skinny nerd on his way home from an IDM convention.

On *Now Soon Someday* he marries both sides of himself, the flamboyant performer and the introverted musician, with more success than even APC hitted off. While his previous work was littered with manic sabotage, here Beans has allowed his ideas to develop and flow as his voice has gained more strength. So if he gets absorbed in a musical motif he stops moping, lets tracks fade out on glowing rays of downer Arthur Russell funk and colored static, with tracks like "Win Or Lose You Lose" and "Compensation In Wolf" coming on like some strange hybrid of Outkast and the 70s EEs. Beans keeps things simple, mimingelling the bass and beats so that the strange prangs of electronica and trebly noise gain maximal impact. Check the slo-mo dancehall shuffle and ghostly shudders of synth of "Overclocker", or "Gold Shaft's" sly waltz away from New Kingdom style blather and some weird new take on Pere Ubu's Dub Housing. The stunning "Choice" and some superb remixes from Prefab 73 tease out with ghostly tails and a psychadelic suggestiveness that you won't hear on any HipHop record this side of CLOUDED8's *7in this year*.

Though Beans will never truly slip the underground leash with music this bugged out and bleak, he's made an album that has performed the twin heresies of being both totally entertaining, and instantly accessible to both avant rap devotees and surious passers-by (Neil Kukuk).

BIG TYMERS DOWN SOUTH

UNIVERSITY 12"

There's Money Fresh, watching the "Player's Ball" video, noting how the box of cornflakes as Outkast's kitchen table is bigger than a bass cabinet. The windows say, Hm! Money puts on Outkast's 1994 debut album and takes it from the bottom: the ending "Player's Ball Reprise" with the Sleepy Eyez appy-off. Money then grabs the coes break piano before it gets out the back door, mimesh's it, grabs Ludacris, lil' Whacey Wayne, Jazzy Pha and himself, and makes a song too good to be buried as an album cut. Right when Money says "weed steering wheel", the Dynomix quad drops, the footboards cough and family pictures jump. The hook thinks it's "Neck Uv Da Woods" all over again. Lil' Wayne types like he just stole Snoop Dogg's pink ring and Pha needs

"that's Southern cousin". Accordingly, Money has a "Southern-ass brain", a "Southern-ass dog" and when he drinks beer he gives a "Southern-ass burp". Luckily he gave us a Southern ass break and sent the keyboard to the store for smokes. Nothing here but piano, bass and guys who might all fit in the Coup DeVille if the speakers ride on the hood and someone hops in the trunk.

DIRPLDO

DU SHADOW LIVE SESSION MEGATROID MIX

TURNTABLISH CD

Deez Peep zips the Domino's Pizza guy to the Mann Bass symphony that is Shadow's "Celestial Arbitration". By the time Bob "Chilly" Crafen leaps on the Nuclear space base, Deez Peep has already run a credit card scam and swindled Whetstone. The dealer is so tight you think they (Shadow, Dipo, Peep, Bob and the British guys in the orchestra) were all in on it from beat one. This 45 minute mix by Hollertronix's Dirpldo zags along with Shadow's *It's Fine And On Time* live DVD (where the latter renames his own catalogue and thrives as a Richard Ashcroft VocaBox for good measure.) Dipo slaps dirty bottoms a clapping onto some Shadow flourishes and puts his own mutations to work as well. Atlanta's Desai gets the "In/Fix" down solo while Kayne Bone has the Electro Lox twinkly snarls of "Screeballer". Cleveland's most needled jets the "Bones" key times and softs 'em with the song's "PEACE (Freestyle Fellowship)", who knows hell and song, was cooking double time long before anyone else in this mix and is found here expiring halfway out the back window while LAPD shoots off the dead bat.

Then Dipo gets to the clapping. The piano from "Blood On The Money" has its spirit留学 with a tribal snap-off. There's electric claps for TV On The Radio. There's Dophus' dogs toe to foot/handshake (or Martone's "Hardcore HipHop"). There's clapping from places where right now there's not much to clap about. And finally, there's an aversion for the sultry Martone, free from Thicke's imp and contributing to Dipo's upcoming album.

JADAKISS

THE CHAMP IS HERE INTERSCOPE 12"

Seems indeed as the rapper who measures himself by his parallel parking skills, "Fuck riding the beat's (expletive) parallel park on the truck." And it's not like Jadakiss is pushing a Fred Flinstie either. The hook is WIT Smith's A1, announcing *East* in the studio doorway seven 15 feet and a smidgen away from the mix, trying to get Nelly Dogg's attention. Blame a sonorous boner for the rise in CPGs, as it's a summer reason to be on wheels rather than feet. It's all about Green Lantern's ceremonial conga, like someone's about to face a war tribunal or lose their head for not attending Jada rhymes around his ashma OK and his voice is so cold that the line about Peppa Blue is granted safe passage.

KANYE WEST

UNRELEASED JOINTS VOL 1 NO LABEL PROMO 12"

The "Through The Wire" mixup isn't much of a remix but it's cool how Kanye hamps on the word "beam" seven times in a row, stuck on production and maybe himself in the process. "Would You Lie To Ryan", or at least the first 15 seconds, is one of his best; a wise 14 college basketball skip and piano rumble, highly loopable to layer save someone's career. The hook process about a Cadillac Escalade, which is impossible to parallel park so its rump always sticks out, clipping bleeps messengers and sending unreleased promises flying into the midtown rush. Feel free to accidentally run over and the turntable during Nelly Yusef's wade. "My Way" is another sweet soul crush with the occasionally socially conscious zinger and "La La" features Jay-Z, recently spotted off stage at a Fresh farewell in Coney Island.

KAMAKAZE FEAT BLAQ POET IT'S ALL GOOD/RIGHT HERE THE GROUP PROMO 12"

During a recent Queens vs Bronx/Mets vs Yankees debate in a Harlem kitchen, a native Queens rap historian waved a billfold frank in the air and huffed, "Oh yeah? Well what about Screwball?" is the mid-90s Screwball tucked into one of Marley's deepest bats, a Seed Children piano originally intended for Nas's second album. Legend has it that Nas put down his woe and later heard beat or song on the radio as a House of Lies bootleg along with a gentleman named Kamakaze, also K.O. On "It's All Good", K.O. sounds like hell earlier stuff in a trachea than buster with a dinky bimble rhyme. Producer Blaq Blize hands him an unabashed guitar crunch and knuckly piano kind of reminiscent of Smeathie Da Hustler's "Broken Language". On the flip, K.O. is joined by former Smeathie Blaq Poet, who's dished about everyone in the phone book and is affiliated with someone named Nastigous. Anyone who drives a Ford Frito in their rhyme is set to be trilled with – plus you can grooveably park that sucker without knocking over the lid in the car.

MOBB DEEP

GOT IT TWISTED

JIVE 12"

Thomas Dolby bumps a skewed version of "Blinded By My Science" at an East LA car show after Alchemist runs the BBOB through the carwash and emerges with a baseline so clean you can actually see it. The "Science" song (switched right before "Science") becomes an evil string section, rolling at a school zone crawl, slow enough to read the rim inscription ("Poetry in motion"). Read: Mobb Deep could have really killed it but chose to stick up the club instead. "Ain't no party once we crack the party." While running home make sure you at least grabbed the instrumental. The ariando has is breath, smoke and doorn being sucked through teeth. Next they should remake Dolby's "One Of Our Subwoofers Is Missing".

THE MARXMEN (MOP)

MARXMEN CINEMA TRAFFIC PROMO CD

Sunday morning, Father's Day. Two CDs full of MOP yodeling and dancing chameleons not dead. A lanky old man strolls by in a sharp brown suit, peeps from under his Goretex bat umbrella and says, "I'm a papa, a grandpa and a great grandpa!" It's hard to believe Billy Crystal and Lil' Flippy have been throwing block parties and writing nose ordinances for six albums while Guru's monologue goes house. One CD is B sides, early classics and unreleased material but inexplicably no "Handle With Bone Remix". The other, *Mixer Cinema*, includes a remake of a Ghetto Boys classic ("King & Two Cops") and a brief commercial that Wino Does grocery ("The Beef People") should adopt. Flippy makes like Biggie Smalls drawing Stan Pankos' Poone from his sister, "Sister Mordis" has a lame Janis Joplin hook but it's hard to beat an insult like "You ass-wipe wannabe boy ass half-baked ass-gravy ass-slap-ass catergator". The album's best production, "Here Today Gone Tomorrow" is an ER sides of fatigue beeps, rife action sound (the mal thing), incredibly well-aimed dead space and Anson Neuville hearing by a strong section. At times the beat is capped with a silence and you wonder will it revive. The 50 Cent op by Big Daddy Keno's old dancer/border sounds like a flavor and though MOP's bong guns are the franchise, remember the old military nut-grabber: "This is my gun, this is for fun." Take "Beef" (spelling mentioned), an unashamed duet with the BBOB chanteuse that mid Nas "By Your Side" into an out of street levity. Somewhat Sade's "77" (which sounds like "Hail") becomes "happo" and when she goes "70 dry your eye", Flippy, clearly choked up, gets the hell out.

ROB SONIC

DEATH VENDOR/DYLSEDIA DEFINITE 12"

A headbut from Rob Smith will easily clean your ears. Rob used to collect plastic football helmets from garage sales and then ram them together until their foamaces fell off. Sonic Sun's Santa Anny slowly crawled (or crawled, depending on the crossover) melancholy gaze around your head. Since going solo, Rob has really tightened the wings on his flow (wait till you hear "Strange Hammer") and his drum machine synth beats are sharp and mean. "Death Vendor" is a D Boogie with a grudge and Old School expertise. "Do the watch boi" and the planet explodes. "Things like "Adventine gunship/Lonetta Sweet Archetype" sound nice even if you didn't know Rob packed a M&P. "I'll sandwich paid in his Maryland preschool. The upside of reading into this too much is "Dylessia", not a pickin' swimuit but an understanding that inverse is a 10 to 1 pan back through the day. 1) thin brick through Zenith, 2) washed overmen have face-off with morrows, 3) use "Casa blanca" in a rhyme Rob can turn a name (Barney Miller's Detective Weishe for instance) that's a beat. Check your Lenore Sweet lunchbox for duds. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

GAIL BRAND & MORGAN GUBERMAN BALLGAMES & CRAZY EMANON CD

Californian vocalist Morgan Guberman suggested that he and London based trombonist Gail Brand should perform as a duo. The idea was a shrewd one, for the outcome, recorded under the supervision of Miles Boisen in Oakland, is outstandingly successful in the terms it establishes for itself.

Guberman utters ceaselessly like a man possessed, slipping in and out of words, in and out of character — confiding old timer, skiving hobo drunk, precariously zealous, big boy, braggadocious. His more abstract murmurings range from pinched pinhead to deeply rounded and fleshly sounds. Brand enters into sympathetic and constructive dialogue — exchanging, accepting, nudging and reining. Her versatile response, with subtle and effective use of mist, confirms that she is an exceptionally attentive, resourceful improviser. Guberman may fall short of the dramatic vigour of Phil Minton, dozen of male improvising vocalists, but there's real purposefulness underlying his volatility.

BRÖTMAN/MCPHEE/ KESSLER/ZERANG TALES OUT OF TIME HAROLDY CD

A Chicago summit during the summer of 2002 delivered these memorable exchanges between Peter Brötmann and Joe McPhee, gazed ghosts of free music. Now less explosive, their tenacity subordinated to a mirthless taste for belittles and a need to elegize lost associates, both men retain their affecting directness in handling sound, although reserves of awesome power remain in evidence. Brötmann is here on alto as well as tenor, McPhee plays tenor, trumpet and pocket cornet.

TrIBUTES are paid to bassist Fred Hopkins, Wilbur Morris and Peter Kowald. Kent Kessler takes up their expressive legacy, his own voice designed to complement the horns in their tassles and lamentations. Michael Zerang is a genuine percussionist, his assured and energetic rhythmic sense couched with an ear for the melodic and coloristic potential of his instruments.

KYLE BRUCKMANN GASPS AND FISSURES 442 MUSIC DOCUMENT CHICAGO CD

Kyle Bruckmann's new CD locates him squarely in the ranks of such uncompromising some ensembles as trumpet Greg Kelley and saxophonist Brad Railey. Bruckmann, a double-reed specialist, uses soprano, English horn, the Chinese suona and Middle Eastern mijwiz to probe the elemental interface of most breath and sounding instrument under close amplified scrutiny.

His findings range from presences multiplying trillies to intense, sustained corrosive blasts and such shrill drosses. There's an air of analytical rigour but also aesthetic pleasure in design and discovery.

GEORGE BURT & RAYMOND MACDONALD OCTET FEATURING LOL COXHILL POPCORN PARCO CD

The third in an occasional series of releases concerning episodes from the bald soprano's outings north of the English-Scots border. This is made particularly appealing by the presence of singer Aileen Campbell and her popcorn machine, the chomping, rattling, spitting cycles of which provide a serial basis for group improvisations. On two tracks, ringing the changes, Campbell substitutes a heady, Coxhill, pianist Bert, saxophonist MacDonald and their Mayhill associates engage in some pleasingly loose improvising that conveys all above the plausibility of collaborative performance. Nicols MacDonald's melodic interjections tonish the congenitally off the occasion as does Alan Pendleton's effusive, high-spirited drumming. A finely reminder of that feeling called community.

DENNIS GONZÁLEZ NY QUARTET NY MIDNIGHT SUITE CLEAN FIELD CD

Dallas trumpeter Dennis González convened a potent quartet for his appearance in a New York trumpet festival in summer 2003. In November he was again joined by Elmer Esclera on tenor, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Mike Thompson to record this studio session. Both González and Esclera are expert improvisers, prelitting melodic cells that mutate fluidly and occasionally leap surprisingly from leftfield. They evoke a wide spectrum of jazz precedents that's been personalized and developed within their own rhythmic convolutions. Helias and Thompson are adept at supporting and extending the horns, adding other tools as they texture the elastic flow of the music.

RUSS LOSSING/ED SCHULLER/PAUL MOTIAN AS IT GROWS MOTILDY CD

NYC pianist Russ Lossing has an elliptical style, alternating between tearyingly expressive aria, driven by a strong left hand and isolated chords or phrases suspended in mid-air, made famous with implication and the prospect of unrealized possibilities. His music is at once well ventilated and evocative, airy and condensed.

For this session, recorded in New Jersey in 2002, he was joined by bassist Ed Schuller and drummer Paul Motian, players who match Lossing in musical sophistication and are finely attuned to navigate the oddly resonant spaces he opens up. Ten tracks, including the five-part "Suite Of Time", are impressively consistent.

SUNNY MURRAY/JOHN EDWARDS/TONY BEVAN HOME COOKING IN THE UK ROCKHORN CD

Home Cooking In The UK is the second of bassist John Edwards and tenor and bass saxophonist

Tony Bevan relishing the opportunity to stretch out in company with an authentic free jazz legend. On this 2003 recording Sunny Murray's drumming still displays the essence of the tidal quality that played such a key role in revitalizing the music during the 1960s. Incessant nipples and breaks, crosscurrents and washes of cymbal spume signal the deep pulsation of energy within his performance. In response to the creative latitude Murray introduces, Edwards and Bevan are articulate without fuss or bluster. The set builds steadily across three tracks, culminating in the suitably fiery "Satin Decline".

LARRY OCHS/ JOAN JEANRENAUD/ MIYA MASAOKA FLY FLY FLY INTAKT CD

Rock Quartet member Larry Ochs has been playing in a trio with Fred Frith's electric guitar and the electronically processed koto of Miya Masaoka. Here Masaoka plays acoustically with former Kronos Quartet cellist, Joan Jeanrenaud and Ochs on tenor and soprano saxophones. Four Ochs compositions incorporating conventional notations, timelines, graphic scoring and visual cues generate impremissory intensity that is both intricate and serious.

The cellos' mellowness and melancholy full around, breathy, reflective tenor lines; the koto's brittle pell-mellism accentuates the soprano's nervous edge. But the picture is much richer and more intuitively complex than such stereotypical roles suggest. The formal pulse of each piece contains extraordinary fluidity of musical identity, continual transformations of mood and material that define rather than jeopardize coherence.

JEFF PARKER/ KEVIN DRUMM/ MICHAEL ZERANG OUT TRIOS VOLUME TWO ATAVISTIC CD

The title is a declaration of intent from this Chicagoan trio, and a cloud of mystery interference shrouds the way into their essence. Once the fog lifts Higgs Parker and Drumm, on guitars and synthesizers, and Zerang playing percussion and aspaxes, make largely well-paced music spiking with energetic collisions, deflections and supple dovetails. They bustle in Spontaneous Music Ensemble's long and expansive wake without getting locked into a fixed or narrow Improv idiom. The continuum of their sound tangles on numerous different complements as it tumbles into existence. A great deal of 'our' room has been staked and sorted in recent decades but, as Parker, Drumm and Zerang show, investigative urgency spiced with recklessness can still find unfettered spaces.

WILLIAM PARKER & AD PEIJNENBURG BROOKLYN CALLING DINOC CD

Dutch saxophonist Ad Peijnenberg is best known as founder of The Six Winds, a reed sextet that has included John Tchicai. Much of Peijnenburg's

playing has been with drummers, including a regular outfit with Louis Moholo and Thebe Lewis. The rhythmic canning required for both those contexts is a defining characteristic of his melodic approach to the baritone horn. He makes effective use of its guffaw and can be tremolously expressive in the course of this recent encounter in New York with bassist William Parker.

That said, there is no straining for unexpected effects. He evokes open patterns that Parker's virtuosity enhances and elaborates. One track has Peijnenberg warbling on soprano, his instrument of choice for street performances. It's good to hear the bassist in such an unassumingly creative context.

SUN RA SPACESHIP LULLABY UN-HEARD MUSIC/DETERMINISTIC CD

A vocal trio called Nu Sounds serves up a sugar-coated rendition of "Stranger In Paradise" with Robert Barry on the drums and Sun Ra on piano. It's as incongruous as Alan Jones bursting into seriously sentimental music midway through a Max Brothman movie. Spacechip Lullaby collects 57 such recordings from the mid-1950s by vocal groups formed by the great Sun Ra prior to his departure for interplanetary flight parts.

As John Corbett observes in his sleeve notes, "few might be shocked to hear the level of schizmaz in some of this material". But ledged in the mundane arrangements and accompanied to cheering are sonorities and ostinatos that foreshadow trips to come. The Cosmic Ray is especially interesting, despite the flawed sound quality of the recording here, with Ra venturing onto electric piano and an ensemble that includes saxophonist Pat Petrucci and John Gilmer and bassist Ronnie Boykins. The quirks and frostbites of Spacechip Lullaby should certainly find favour with both students of avant lone and denizens of the aetica lounge.

RICH WEST BEDOUIN HORNBOOK MOTILDY CD

UK drummer Rich West acts as nucleus to a fresh sounding quintet with Chris Heenan on bass clarinet and alto saxophone, trumpeter Bruce Friedman, Jeremy Drake's electric guitar and Scott Ray's tuba. West's compositions regularly evoke, through floating phrases and accents, the "blissweet life is a circus" music that Nino Rota wrote for Fellini's *8½*.

The instrumental levels tend to such allusion, which constitutes a helpful point of coordination as West's musical horizons extend out to other quite different directions. Tightly scored ensemble actions loosen into free play, funk gives way to atmosphere. One track develops out of a fuzzy chime, the next is underpinned by a bawdy lope. West accommodates successfully the stylized inclinations and instrumental idiosyncrasies of his collaborators, with contexts of interest continually shifting. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Philip Clark

GEORGES APERGHIS

TINGEL TANGEL

Like Iannis Xenakis, Georges Aperghis migrated from his native Greece to Paris and, like Iannis Xenakis, his music has a curious sense of 'real'. There the similarity ends. Aperghis's music is intimately connected with his understanding of the theatre and his compositional technique is based on his experience of musicians and actors equally. His pieces often have saraband dances and Teigot Tanger invents its own intriguing world of absurd cabaret, realised for an ensemble of soprano, violin, accordion and percussion. He keeps the narrative non-specific and deals in archetypes of humour and tragedy, hitting the performers square in the face with structural castles. Superando Vivaldi (Philippe Lefèvre) ticks the castles up with relish. The disc also contains, bizarrely, Lionel Pergolizzi's mimetic performance of Jacobins, another of Aperghis's solo restorations exploring substructures of language and meaning.

MICHAEL VON BIEL

JAGDSTUCK

SONOM RZCD

Between 1962 and 1980 German composer Michael Von Biel created a unique series of works which investigated a trajectory between noise and everyday 'found' musical objects, after which he switched to visual arts. The most audible reference point for Von Biel's music is Edgard Varèse. In his ensemble piece Jagdstück (Hunting Piece), the industrial rumblings of electronically amplified barbecue girls cut through a surface of brass instruments playing toothless hunting tunes while electric guitars simultaneously trash the landscape. Von Biel imagines a monstrous wasteland clash between the hidebound social attitudes embodied in the upper-class hunting horn and harder modern day realities. This music is revolutionary, a visionary achievement for 1966. Three fastidiously mixed string quartets (1961, '63 and '65) reinvent the Old World ensemble as a noise machine and then reapply traditional gestures, while the characterful, electric *Russing* is on a different level to much dispassionate electroacoustic music of the time – *Imagining* Götze meets Helmut Lachenmann perhaps?

JAMES DILLON

THE BOOK OF ELEMENTS

NMC CD

CORRADO CANONICI

A ROARING FLAME

NMC CD

Scottish composer James Dillon's 80 minute piano work *The Book of Elements* (1997–2003) is as spiritually uplifting and intellectually stretching a piece as I've heard in a long time. Dillon unsheaves his title as referring to the meeting of elements in chemistry being an 'inseparable substance' and in a wider philosophical sense as the 'foundation of everything', but his piece must also be seen as a celebration of his profound understanding of what makes a piano tick. References to

Beethoven, Schumann, Brahms, Messiaen and Xenakis flow but are adroitly contained within greater structural schemata. Dillon is often categorised as a disciple of Michael Finnissy and Brian Ferneyhough, but his counterpart here between a complexity of surface and a folk-like clarity continues to evolve into an ever more personal vision. Japanese pianist Noriko Kawai delivers an inspiring performance.

Dillon's 1982 piece for double bass and soprano, *A Roaring Flame*, lands its title to a new restful disc by the brilliant Italian bassist Cesareo Canessa. Dillon's piece sets a text by 13th century poet Clément de Anduze, combining glassy vocal lyricism and trashy bashes. Other pieces by Finnissy, Christopher Fox, Dame Barbara and a surprisingly gritty early work by Oliver Knussen add up to an intriguing listen.

ROGER DOYLE

CHARLOTTE CORDAY AND THE LAMENT OF LOUIS XVI

WAVES/CD

Irish composer Roger Doyle 'became a self-taught drummer on beans and beetroot', and later became a composer, writing Six Poems For Pupils Who Don't Like Games when he was a piano teacher. He is now based in Holland and wrote Charlotte Corday And The Lament Of Louis XVI to celebrate the bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989. Doyle assembled the piece from samples of drum rolls and vocal material, whipping the whole lot into a picturesque evocation of an imaginary paradise passing through the streets of Paris. The impact of Cage's *Roastbeef* can be felt in the general bustle and energy of the piece, and the hint of modern day Paris in the closing moments adds a thoughtful flourish. Also included is the first volume of *Pessadas*, Doyle's pieces based on software, which acts like the freeze-frame and zoom facilities on a DVD. His sensitive ear produces captivating results.

HEINZ HOLLIGER

VIOLIN CONCERTO

ECM NEW RECORDS CD

As an instrumentalist Heinz Holliger reinvented the humble oboe during the salutary days of the 1960s Central European went genre, and he's also been a significant presence as a composer. His output can be uneven, as his 2001 *Hahn Concerto* proves by taking too long to establish much that's interesting. The piece was inspired by the violinist and violinist Louis Soutter (1872–1942), and Holliger notes that Soutter's 'nervous bashes' can be translated into pectches on an almost one-to-one basis'. Soutter also experimented with disengaging pairings that could be hung either way up, a concept Holliger mimics with the interchanges of pectches and rests. The opening movement is muddy and meandering, but then Holliger discourses increasing textual clarity and pectches with refined and oblique colour. The wendily unringed and random sounds of the final two movements are brilliantly conceived, and violinist Thomas Zehetmair's charisma adds a whole other dimension to this performance.

GUUS JANSSEN

HOLLYWOOD O.K. PIECES

GEESGRONDEN CD

Pianist and composer Guus Janssen has backed George Lewis, John Zorn and Han Bennink, while also producing fully composed pieces for Ensemble Modern and The Novox Quartet. Hollywood O.K. Pieces formed in his mind after he heard tapes of Hollywood film musicians 'doing their own peculiar musical enterprises outside the studio – very strange instrumentalizations with "outcast" jazz instruments like oboe and bassoon'. Janssen doesn't consider himself to be a jazz composer but his juxtapositions of personality-plus written material with improvisation has terrific synergy. He creates a spectrum of highly original instrumental colourings from an ensemble of Peter van Bergen (clarinet), Vincent Chaneey (French horn), Michael Rehbein (bassoon) plus a jazz rhythm section. Klezmer-style twists with the contours of jazz borrowed from the saxophone master, while the 'on the fly' structures of Anglicanumans tams an unexpectedly at every corner.

GYÖRGY LIGETI

THE LIGETI PROJECT VOLUME 5

TELEOS CLASSICS CD

The first volume of this series appeared in 1996 on Sony Classical, and now reaches its final volume at Telos. Highlights are performances of Ligeti's fantastical 1960s *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*, pieces that redefined the conventional narrative of music theatre in favour of stylised gesture and emotion. Brigitte Santer (soprano), Linda Hirst and Omer Ebrahim step into the heart of Ligeti's dark snapshot, and the instrumentalists of the Schoenberg Ensemble respond to their soaring and reaching with cello-sawder spontaneity. The vocalised quality of Ligeti's 1988 electronic piece *Artikulation* opened doors for *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures* and makes for a revealing comparison. The disc also offers a rarely heard early Cello Sonata and examples of Ligeti's formative studies of Hungarian and Romanian folklore.

BRIAN OSBORNE

MUSIC CONCAGNETE

NO LABEL CD

Brian Osborne is New York based and has worked with The George Street Ensemble, and the trio Music For Strings And Percussion. This solo CD restricts itself to metal sounds only with prominent roles for gongs, pipes, bells, finger cymbals and metallic odds 'y' odds. He transforms gentle patterning into richly played constructs pecked tantalisingly between mystery and complexity. His pieces have great titles too: *Rona Upon Her Bucket and Brains Full Of Sparks*, *Bacone The Stars*.

PETER SCARTABELLO

CAST

TUDOR CD

Put your Hand on my forearm and whisper the sign is getting stronger... in my ear – not performance instructions but actually the title of

Peter Scartabello's meditative work for solo guitar, here played by Ben Moran. Rhode Island based Scartabello's strength is his subtle, imaginative feel for textures that seamlessly mesh into something greater than their individual parts. His 1997 *Cast* for string quartet is a mournful piece, with a soundworld balanced somewhere between late Schubertian quanta and Morton Feldman. The Charlestons Quartet play with remarkable stillness and control, and the disc ends with *Electro-Magma* for bass clarinet accompanied by miscellaneous metallic rattles.

DAN TRUEMAN

MACHINE LANGUAGE

ORIGINE CD

Dan Trueman's background is as a classical violinist and performer of traditional Norwegian Hardanger fiddle music. However, he writes in his sleeve notes, 'I got really sick of playing "violin music", but still wanted to play the violin'. Unfortunately Trueman's solution – hooking his electric violin up to a laptop and writing his own music – is also part of the problem. His writing fits strong instruments like a glove, but this technical acquisition fits his aesthetic ambition. The opening rhythmic bounce of *Spring Rhythm* quickly develops into fused funk, and the ensemble writing on *Counteflat Curve* is just too affable for its own good. Trueman does have an inventive ear for strong textures, but there's not much purpose beyond the notes.

CHRISTIAN WOLFF / ROBYN SCHULKOWSKY

PERCUSSIONIST SONGS

MATCHLESS CD

CHRISTIAN WOLFF
(RE): MAKING MUSIC – WORKS
1962–99
Matchless CD

The double-meaning title of *(Re): Making Music* encapsulates Wolff's optimised approach to composition, an attitude summarised by bionerd James Rulifson as one of constantly posing the question 'How do we make music?' The double *Matchless* set surveys the multitude of small-scale chamber vignettes that form the backbone of Wolff's output. The *Carlton Workshop*'s understanding of his intentions is assured. The resonance of his music lies in its centring axis between randomness and the discipline of canons and strict counterpoint. His work has a rare sense of deftness either and his insistence on 'making' pieces rather than composing them implies a sense of no-nonsense tactile craft. *Peas like Ermine* for solo cello and piano have the spontaneity of process-as-composition, yet Wolff never quite reveals what that process is.

The *Matchless* duo, meanwhile, documents Wolff's creative partnership with percussionist Robyn Schulkowsky. Wolff's concept of percussion writing is decidedly anti-macho – the two key cycles *Percussionist Songs* and *Percussionist Dances* work with delicately unfolding material stripped of excess or fussy decoration. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

ALPHANE MOON EXPERIMENTING WITH AN AMEN

OGGUM CD

OUR GLASSIE AZOTH THE MAGICIAN'S HEAVENLY CHORUS

OGGUM CD

Reclusive Welsh duo Daf and Ruth Roberts rival electronic pioneers Louis and Bebe Barron in their enduring love of feedback and all its painfully glorious manifestations. The agonizing, taut durations of *The Magician's Heavenly Chorus*, stretched to breaking point over 25 minutes, recall the gigantic underground generators pulsing at the heart of *Alta 4* in *Forbidden Planet*. It traces a direct line connecting the cybernetic theories of Robert Wiesner with the alchemical diagrams depicted on the cover of a CD featuring tools formerly available only as limited edition releases. That Alphane Moon and Our Glassie Azoth share the same personnel and perform strikingly similar material is probably the quirkiest but least disturbing aspect of these marvelously hermetic recordings.

NELS CLINE & DEVIN SARNO BURIED ON BUNKER HILL

GROUND FAULT CD

Five years on from Eddie Bowers, their last collaboration on the WH label, guitarist Nels Cline and bassist Devin Sarno have added studio multitracking to their deployment of loops, delays and effects to further deepen the riffs and sustain of their sound. The relative surface calm of *Swinging London* hides a churning machine beneath, thereby wrecking havoc with Ground Fault's self-imposed classification system of volume levels. The sleeve says it's a *Series I* (quiet) entry, which is true of the lumpy "Only Peas" and "A Kite In The Wind", but the darker dynamics lurking within "Hydrofall" suggest *Bunker Hill* would be an easy fit for Series II (medium) or even Series III (loud). You have been warned.

HOLLYDRIFT WAITING FOR THE TILLER

PARKSONIC CD

You really want to hope that Hollydrift's Mathias Anderson doesn't nose in next door to you. The guy creates music that sounds as if it can walk through walls. Faded deep within each complicated composition are moments of pure drama and genuine anxiety. Against regged seems of noise, a shadow puppet theatre of dismembered voices and electromagnetic exchanges takes place. A set of multi-frequency tones, the constant repetition of a girl's name and a salesmen dictating a business letter conspire on "Mania Relay" to conjure up scenes that wouldn't be out of place in a Guy Maddin movie.

"Lokeshan Skysur" evokes dispiriting memories of a "summer evening at the transmisor". War seems to have broken out over the airwaves on "Very Red Majority" and that's just for starters. Whatever ghosts Anderson is

exorcising here, you wouldn't want them moving in next door either.

JASCH SHIMMER

OGGUM CD

The first release on OGG not to directly involve label owner Pure, Shimmer marks the debut of a Swiss electronic artist whose work has hitherto been presented mostly in gallery installations. A collaborator with American video artist Johnny Deakin in the audiovisual project DIA!, Jasch favours gradually accumulating effects, predominantly pure tones and the occasional flash of humour ("Lordly's Rainbow", for example, suggests an appropriate counterbalance to "gravity"). With a digress in double bass and a Masters in digital arts, Jasch appears to have sourced many of his sounds from bowed and plucked strings, their presence being most noticeable on "Phenotype", which he then manipulates via his own customised software. The results seethe and hover, as only installation can, waiting for someone to pass through them.

KANG TAE HWAN TRIO LOVE TIME

YHJ CD

Starting in a mode so subdued it seems positively levitic, Korean alto saxophonist Kang Tae Hwan leads percussive Makoto Kawabata, and Acid Mothers Temple member Ichiroku Yoshimatsu through the creation of a single group composition. Coming in just shy of 50 minutes, *Love Time* is a work of meditative intensity. You can image the three musicians barely keeping eye contact. Hwan has a visceral feel for the tassions and textures to be discovered in the manipulation of his instruments' need, his long circular tones finding a deaf response in Kawabata's siring and Yoshimatsu's use of bowed percussion. Even a switch towards the end to bowed guitar and drums by Kawabata and Yoshimatsu respectively is kept mainly in check by Hwan's focused playing.

KAPOTTE MUZIEK CURING WITHOUT KILLING

FENCING PLATFORM CD

20 years on from the project's inception, Bœsken's Frans de Waard has now released his final studio recording as Kapotte Muziek. An evocation of the auditory experiences to which anaesthetised patients are subject during surgical procedures, *Curing Without Killing* is a series of pulsatile hums and vibrations presented as one continuous track. Even considering the work's explicit connection to extreme sensory impressions that are not supposed to be happening, de Waard's ability to infuse even the briefest of silences with a sense of menace is quite extraordinary.

LONGSTONE LIFE SPAN

BLACK BEAN AND PLACENTA CD

Our fascination for space is essentially nostalgic for species. We are constantly weaving it through

the eyes of others. Longstone's fifth album, a rough crosscut selection of ten untitled instruments, expresses a fond remembrance for the limitless possibilities to be found in space rock's past. As analogue synths and guitar effect pedals, beeps and beeps, rhythm boxes and sequencers tell their story in wailing direct tones, Mike Cross and Mike Ward continue to shift perspectives with their usual aplomb. It's a bit like turning through a radio late at night — the eerie exuberance of hearing familiar things distorted by extreme distance. The occasional voice is captured off the airwaves. It all makes sense as you drift from station to station, like the Speak & Spell man has a few pertinent things to say about animals. It depends on which buttons you push. Whatever, it's clear that Cross and Ward know what they're doing.

MASSONI STILLBORN DREAMS

SPACE AGE CD

A dry, dystopian energy runs through John Massoni's follow up to *Sundowner Sessions*, recorded for the Space Age label in partnership with former Spacemen 3 maestro Sonny Boone. "Happy days, avenie pie", in women's voice intones over and over again, a counterpoint to Rich Hinkley's distorted vocal arrangement, while Massoni fashions a world of pained unease around them. Such causal unease goes well with the quirkiness and sportiness of Massoni's playing. His slurred tape recordings and swelling keyboards on "Spells", mixed by Sonny Boone, have a heady immediacy to them. "Memory As Flame" is a bit giddiness and harsh surfaces, "Dumbbeats" an uncomfortable slacking of tapped guitar noise. *Stillborn Dreams* may not take you to the happiest place on earth, but it has a genuine vibrancy to it.

MEMORY CELLS NO PEOPLE HERE

ANCIENT CD

Originally the soundtrack to an Ambient VHS video release shot by Stephen Rennicks while fellow group members Arthur Cernial and Adrienne Flynn recorded their 2000 debut album *Night, No People*, *Here* is available on CD for the first time. Formed in 1999 in the basement of a Dublin council house, *Memory Cells* broke up in May 2001 at the end of their one and only gig in Belfast, which must have been quite an event. The moody and muted scrutinisation of their demo recordings, prepared for memory in fetching, hand-made sleeve art, suggest a task designed for interesting things. Rennicks, for example, went on to make a short film about Richard Shave, whose early writings in *Amusing Stories* helped prepare America for the flying saucer scenes of the 1950s.

JON MUELLER/BHOB RAINYEY/ JIM SCHOENECKER

JON MUELLER/BHOB RAINYEY/
JIM SCHOENECKER

CIRCUITON CD

A set of group explorations featuring Jon Mueller and Bhob Rainey on bass and Jim Schoenecker on grudgingly proton synthesizer, these pieces probe every seafid surface and dusty corner of a worn out world. Even the titles of the four compositions hint at the last stages of decay. The extended endy of the main two sequences, "These Leaking Maths have passed" and "Holes" make a virtue of exhaustion, while the shorter "Jagged paper, belt" and "Ho tooted to rose", opening and closing the album, find a use for those last remaining flakes of nervous energy. A twitchy, frosty offering, but it holds the attention nonetheless.

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NO XIVIC UNIKSUA ONYX CD

Nothing much happens here among the deep drones and sombre industrial inflections, but what does has return to it. Recorded and produced by Henrike Ryttinen for Finland's festy Onyx label, *Uniksua* is a depicted moment, protracted. If it's easy to leave yourself in the slow subterranean contractions of tracks like "Gigantic Teas", with its distant sounds of metal on metal, or "Unipuu", featuring ethereal vocals from Tinei Ollonen, there's probably because you've already certainly heard these effects somewhere before. It becomes an endless reverberation. "King Culture" is the Onyx mission statement. Sticking closely to the only familiar should just add to it.

PEDESTRIAN DEPOSIT VOLATILE NOSTALGIC CD

If they ever develop a means of sonically bleaching unvarnished parbakeable matter out of the human body, chances are the most audible parts of it will sound like this. From east California's San Joaquin Valley, noise crew Pedestrian Deposit won't just blow the wax out of your ears, they'll remove the fat from your belly button, any toe jars that might have survived your morning shower plus maybe a few other body parts too. Products too distillate to mention here. We're talking exhalation with extreme preazeze here. These guys blow volume, pitch and raw snarling power around, with tenaciousness verbe.

SECOND THOUGHT PURLIEU SECOND THOUGHT CD

Taking its title from the term for a stretch of land bordering the edge of a royal forest, Ross Baker's latest release shows the same conceptual boldness as his *Rosethorn* project in which he recorded six different versions of his favorite song A 16 page booklet, containing overseas rare images of hedgehogs and church pews plus an exultantly displaced first person narrative, accompanies this cycle of wistful instrumental sketches. Evoking the moist contours of a desolate neorealist terrain, *Purlieu* does a thorough job of peeling out its boundaries and limitations. Birds sing, thunder rumbles and Baker's keyboards sing plausibly in the distance, recalling memories of a time when all of this was just fables. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



The world won't listen: Eddie Prevost

MINUTE PARTICULARS EDWIN PREVOST

COPULA PPK \$25

BY DAVID STUSSAC

AMM drummer Eddie Prevost is a fiercely articulate keeper of the free Improv conscience. For him, aesthetics and ethics are not separate categories, as philosophy traditionally has. Making music and even listening to music are moral pursuits, or at least pursuits subject to morality. Contemporary artists are privileged individuals and Prevost proposes that they respectfully rename themselves "cultural workers". This prescription, plus his elevation of the "communitarian" approach to music-making may strike some readers as similes, carrying with it as it does the faintest, lingering odor of Maoist coercion. Prevost's idealism is certainly shockingly, affashionably stale. However, given the merrily compromised and corporatism musical times in which we live, isn't a corrective dose of just this what's needed?

Minute Particulars (subtitled *Musings on Music Making: In the Wake of Hierarchical Realignments And Other Essays*) outlines the need for an art that is "humane, contemporary and revolutionary in its nature", one sorely lacking today, if ever it existed. Prevost argues persuasively and methodically but also reflectively. He looks upon the giddy eclectic and diverse state of modern music with suspicion rather than celebration. He's wary of electronics because of the power they confer on

the player to drown out his acoustic co-worker, as happened to his friend and AMM colleague John Tilbury during one unfortunate gig with the electronic orchestra NIMED. Indeed, a similar collision was leveled at Miles Davis during his electric period – that amplification precluded the musicians from listening to each other.

Furthermore, argues Prevost, with electronics there is no "tacit" relationship between the musician and their instrument, a regrettable trend symptomatic of times in which technology is disconnecting us, rather than connecting us to the world. Sampling is doubtful too, as it "in effect denies the history of the sampled object". Institutional music forms are to be shunned because they lack openness, fluidity, have hardened into dogma, rules for their own sake. The artist who works alone, reasonably, is merely perpetuating a romantic, fixed myth of the "hero" whose over-entitled status leads to false idolatry and passive absorption on the listener's part. Such artists, Prevost suggests, are apt to belong to that pernicious class of persons who "do things to" people rather than doing them with them.

Thus, Prevost walks us to the (implied) conclusion that there is only one valid and morally impeccable mode of music making – that practiced by, well, Eddie Prevost and co. And not even all of them. One of the more remarkable features of Minute Particulars is that fellow AMM member Keith Rowe is frequently uploaded, for his avowed refusal to listen to his

fellow music makers onstage, for his punishing sonic simulations of agony, which Prevost hews upon. Could it be that profound disagreement is a key binding agent of AMM? Or does this hint at a schism?

For Prevost, free Improv is a working metaphor for an ideal for living and considering, with its emphasis on open and appropriate musical dialogue, its communian approach to both fellow musicians and audience, its freedom from marketing and individual musical constraints, its patient, un hurried and un mechanized craftsmanship. "No sound is innocent," Prevost has previously argued, but through free Improv, the sounds generated are, at best, the least guilty.

All very true and beautiful. However, it would be a grafting, grey-capped world indeed in which the sole musical activity consisted of, say, spontaneous, acoustic dialogue between percussion and trombone and one that would have to be enforced rather than organized – the musical equivalent of an agrarian state. Furthermore, as a perfect marriage of art and morality is essentially dispensable, Prevost mildly shdes John Cage for not having been initially aware of the Futurist musician Luigi Russolo. But does he acknowledge the (more than a) grain of truth in the Futurist dream that "art can be nothing but violence, cruelty and injustice"? As for egotism and anti-heroism, it is really regrettable that, for example, Jimi Hendrix downed Noel Redding on "Youือoo Child (Slight Return)"? Would a more equitable musical

arrangement have made that a better record? Do we not need Übermenschen?

Conversely, is it fair to raise such strong misgivings about electronic music without taking into account that the musicians themselves might be aware of such misgivings, operating in good faith and, indeed, using electronic music "against" itself?

In fairness to Prevost, he is surely aware that free Improv is in no danger of establishing a global hegemony. Being a West Ham United fan, he's doubtless long since adjusted to perennial disappointment. Moreover, he would probably no more desire such a hegemony than he would West Ham win the Premiership every season. Hence, this book is best read as a defense and articulation of the principles of Improv, as well as a general injunction to be wary of motives and outcomes when making music. Furthermore, Minute Particulars, which also contains excellent, bristly pieces on Wynton Marsalis and The Genghis, who among others, is an intellectually groping and extremely engaging read. There are frequent moments when you want to stand and cheer in agreement. This is a vital text, which no one should be exempt from reading: it opens its mouth against what the author describes as the "ekker givens" under which so much modern music, even the supposedly avant-garde, is produced, dares to ask fundamental questions for too infrequently passed: Why do we do this? Why do we listen to this? □

100 MODERN SOUNDTRACKS

PHILIP BROPHY

BFI SCREEN GUIDES PBK £10.99

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Let's talk about format for a minute here, because you may want to think about where you're going to keep this volume once you've finished reading it. Too short to fit with your DVD collection, too tall to sit comfortably alongside your CDs, the book's actual dimensions — handsome and easily manageable as they are — might suggest a home on the shelf reserved for the kind of cultural soufflé guides that have been multiplying over the past few years.

But then this last option isn't going to work either. Always a stimulating and welcome contributor to this magazine's pages, film theorist and composer Philip Brophy can confidently be relied upon to offer his readers a little more than the comfortable overview, the easy historical option or the simple arrangement of tried preferences. This is by no stretch of the imagination your 100 top movie tunes in digital form. Instead Brophy sets out to chart a shifting terrain that is simultaneously partial yet all-embracing.

The audible content of a film, he argues, has its own dynamics, presence and character. As such

it tells its own story — one that does not necessarily respond well to standard critical responses. The reader is consequently presented with an alphabetically organised selection of short essays, each one dealing with a specific film in terms of the singular anomalies taking place on its soundtrack, be it music, sound, dialogue or an enigmatic conundrum of all three. The result is an engaging little book of heresies that's probably best read in silence, far away from the audiovisual 'bombe' — to use one of Brophy's favourite critical terms here — of the films themselves.

All heresy, of course, is dependent on a certain degree of common assumption, and *100 Modern Soundtracks* is no exception. It's aimed squarely at both the inovaguer who has already built up a large record collection and the record collector whose listening habits have subsequently led them towards a certain type of movie. No big surprise then to encounter *Apocalypse Now*, *The Driver, Lost Highway*, *Psycho*, *Scarface*, *Crash*, *Stalker* or *Blade Runner* discussed here.

In a very real sense the auditory and visual components of such cult flicks have become virtually interchangeable, and it's to Brophy's credit that he strives to bring back a little of the

exhilarating strangeness that first discovery of such films can bring. He shows even greater resource in his selection of Denzel Washington's *Blue*, in which sequences of spoken word, hospital visitors and music are played out over an unweaving blue screen, and the Pittsburgh Trilogy, Stan Brakhage's unfinding 1972 study of human anatomy which constitutes, in Brophy's words, "the laziest silent movie ever made".

Such extreme anomalies can inspire some of his best writing. Treating auditory effects as if they are autonomous entities capable of taking on a writing as well as that of their own leads him to free up his responses, allowing for daring shifts and provocative arguments. He's at his best when suggesting that film musicals have not been included in this survey because they are "more documentaries than anything else in their assimilation of the spatial warp between the Broadway stage and the Hollywood soundstage".

Less successful, perhaps, are those moments when, instead of focusing his writing upon effects, it becomes an effect in itself. Opening sentences are sometimes allowed to lengthen indefinitely, allowing precious meaning to slip away. His preliminary summation of *Apocalypse Now's* social and historical significance, for

example, should ideally come with its own turnoff lamp.

Weird linguistic aberrations abound; nouns frequently become adverbs or emerge as the passive forms of verbs. Such traits don't do much deserve meaning as render it unhelpfully ambiguous at moments when a little more clarity would have been appreciated. They can also divert attention away from some of Brophy's bolder gestures, such as the decision to discuss music's relation to the overall composition of the soundtracks either as simply another sound source, thereby equating the use of the second movement of Beethoven's Symphony No 9 in *Karnival's A Clockwork Orange* with the oven chattering in Hitchcock's *The Birds* or the presence of Bobby Vinton's "Blue Velvet" in Kenneth Anger's *Scorpio Rising*, or by ignoring the composer as a named contributor altogether, outside of a brief mention in the film's main credits.

As a shrewd slighting of auteur theory, such a move has obvious merit. Its wider implications, however, might require a larger, perhaps less linguistically extravagant study — one that would unquestionably find a place in anyone's bookshelf. It's very likely that Brophy will confound us again. □

SOUNDING ART

KATHLEEN NORMAN

ASHMOLE HMK + CD £49.95

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Sounding Art is a defiantly subjective collection of writings — an "unashamedly personal response" to electronic music as "sounding art", explains sound artist Kathleen Norman. Norman moves from sharp musical observation to sometimes prosaic commentary and poetic expression, and the book's strangeness is enhanced by the publisher's attempts at typographic variety — distractingly ugly typewriter fonts are presumably meant to evoke notes and jottings but come across as bad desktop publishing.

Discussion is keyed in to tracks on the accompanying CD, and perhaps it's best to think of the book as a collection of commentaries on these extracts, which run from electroacoustic composition and electronics to documentary sound and field recordings.

The first chapter, "Concrete Tales And Touching Times", focuses on the shimmering white noise

effects of Iannis Xenakis's neglected *Concrete IV*, his introduction to Evgueni Vassiliev's contribution to the Philips Pavilion at the 1958 Brussels World Fair. Amazingly, the Philips executives had originally considered Benjamin Britten as composer, but eventually architect Le Corbusier got his way and Vassiliev was commissioned, while the architect's assistant Xenakis got little credit for his role.

Norman reminds us that the "concrete" in musique concrète refers to the substantial nature of the real, physical objects that produce the sounds. She also comments persuasively on the lack of narrative intent in Phil Niblock's *Chira*, a 45 minute documentary presented simultaneously with the multi-tracked drones of *Winter Music* — though the extract is too brief to give much of a flavour.

Norman raises some important artistic questions — and expands some rare whilst — in discussing Peter Cusack's "Canardido Atmosphere", a sound environment recorded in East London's Lea Valley. She explains how Cusack's subtle editing creates a personal sound

map that contrasts both with "sexually 'new age' ambient recordings" and the didactic presentation of aural "exhibits". More interventionist is Paul Lansky's *Night Traffic*, which digitally "comb-filtered" musical pitches from the sounds of traffic on a busy highway. Renéco López explores how, in his "Unfinished #9", he is "fighting against a disposition of pure sound content into conceptual and referential elements... I'm trying to reach a transcendental level of profound listening that enlarges the crude possibilities of the sound matter by itself" (from an interview at www.cheminodis.com/paper/). It's a profound question — which could perhaps have been explored more deeply by Norman — what exactly that dissipation amounts to, and how we struggle to avoid hearing the sounds of waves and insects in its piece.

An important theme is inspired by R Murray Schafer's World Soundscape Project. Norman interviews Schafer's colleague Hildegard Westerkamp, but the recordings and transcriptions of their meandering conversations

while walking through a park left me unmoved. More involving is Westerkamp's talking *Wain* for two-channel tape, composed from snatches from the west coast of British Columbia. The most entertaining track, though, is Pamela Z Gevaert's, which Norman analyses insightfully. While computer experts are interviewed discussing different computer operating systems, Askari for their definitions of "geek" and "nerd", they eagerly sing their own grave and jump in. This is a documentary radio work that also features various rhythmic patterns — it's formally well constructed, but in production terms the sound is "unidirectional", with room noise as crude editing cuts.

The book and disc conclude with classic noise and electronics from Autecore, Terre Thaemlitz and Mombow (a forbiddingly cavernous extract from *Loop Panic Limited*), plus "White" from John Dens' *Phonophere* CD, with a whimsical ring Crosby cooing "White Christmas", assisted by an unpealed collaboration between African Pygmies and a tango orchestra. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Equipped with seismometers, artist Mark Bain can turn architectural structures into giant musical instruments and demolish buildings with sound alone. By Rahma Khazam



Left: Mark Bain's inflatable Sonusphere, emitting the plane's seismic signals. Right: Bain recording radiation from a nuclear power plant

"In a way, the art world would rather be dealing with abstractions than the real thing," says Mark Bain, an American sound artist who's currently based in Amsterdam. "If a work is too real, it belongs to the world of conservatism and mass production. But I wish to make art more than just art, where the work fully integrates into society, and the real and the simulation blur together." Blurring art and reality has always been the focus of Bain's HG Wells-like experiments: last year's Sonusphere, a six-metre high inflatable speaker installed in an exhibition space in Oldenburg, Germany magnified the normally inaudible seismic signals occurring below ground. Meanwhile, the portable earthquake machines he showed in Holland in 2001 produced severe tremors that spread through the surrounding area. Then there was Hit Pearl, a large music venue in The Hague slated for demolition. The oscillators he attached to the building activated the entire structure, inflicting severe damage on parts of the walls and ceiling.

Consisting of sensing devices, oscillators and the occasional sculptural element, as in the case of Sonusphere, Bain's stark pieces are more concerned with the physicality of sound than aesthetic considerations: "The systems I design are not normal art pieces — they are more like mutated research technology. Most technology has a very focused use value, whereas I am interested in taking it in other directions." The implications of Bain's work are far-reaching: "His sonic attack on structures, for instance, are a response to thoughtless architectural practices and the over-exploitation of the environment. 'Property laws and urban planning can also be a form of spatial terrorism, of endless expansion, destruction and exploitation,' he asserts.

Bain's love/hate relationship with architecture goes back to his childhood — his father, brother and grandfather were all architects. He studied design for a while but soon abandoned it "due to all the structures

and rules and boring people. I was searching for a freer context for working." He found that context at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he spent time in the libraries studying, among others, the ideas of inventor engineer Nikola Tesla, and came up with a system for resonating buildings that allowed him to "play" structures. "The multi-resonator system I designed could drive waveforms into buildings," Bain comments, "like giant additive synthesis where you get different beatings of frequencies and shifted harmonics. I was basically designing systems that turned a structure into a musical instrument."

He soon began recording the results of these activation experiments with the help of arrays of earthquake detectors, which were capable of picking up the low frequencies involved. Fascinated by the hidden worlds they opened up, he began using them on their own, without the vibration system. "Thanks to these devices," Bain explains, "which acted like hypersensitive contact mics, I found this secret world of microsound lying beneath our feet and containing a quality of sublime heftiness." The Staalfabrik project in Antwerp was one of a number of pieces inspired by these findings. It tapped the ambient sounds resident within the structure of a laboratory, the sound of all the impacts and vibrations travelling through it. The rich mellifluous drones they produce can be heard on the Staalfabrik mini-CD Vibronics. These days, Bain is working with seismic listening stations around the world. This research has led to StartEndTime, released on Staalfabrik this month, which decodes and samples the ground vibrations created by the collapse of the World Trade Center and the two impacts. "I wanted to wait a while before releasing it so that it would not take on some kind of memorial aspect," he says. "For me it is more about the sound. If you imagine the Twin Towers acting as a seismic tuning fork connected to the earth, when you listen to the impacts sped up a few thousand times,

you can actually hear the towers ringing."

The literally earth shaking implications of some of Bain's pieces mean that he is frequently obliged to tone down his work for reasons of instance or plain fear on the part of cultural institutions. This happened at 2002's Frequenzen festival in Frankfurt, where he showed a modified version of his original heavy resonance project on account of the precariousness of the building. The oscillators he placed outside the Schirn Kunsthalle merely evoked the idea of resonance and destruction. Global politics have also had an impact on his work. Upstaged somewhat by the events of 11 September 2001, he feels the need to consider new ideas. As he points out: "How can I compete with that spectacle — Hollywood can't even match it!"

Bain's new lines of research include ways of visualising sound that will heighten his auditory experiments. Narrative Architecture, recently shown at the Denettsche +/- 0 Biennale, turns Paris's Ecole des Beaux-Arts into an outsize microphone, relaying all the micro-disturbances taking place within the structure to a listening space located at the end of one of the galleries. A high-powered laser system beams a bright green line of light around the lower perimeter of the space, optically disengaging the walls from the floor and reducing the pulse of the building's internal structure. Bain is also working on a series of telephonic projects such as Hotline, a performance piece prefiguring the electronic surveillance systems of the future. During each performance, callers can phone in and listen to the sounds of Bain's body, the beating of his heart and such like. These live sounds are picked up by acoustic sensors embedded in his body — mirroring his monitoring projects for buildings and subterranean activity. As Bain puts it, "Live sound is everywhere, an orchestration that infects everything with microsound and vibration. For me, this is the living entity that defines our existence." □ StartEndTime is out this month on Staalfabrik.



Crowds and power: images from John Oswald's *l'Arc D'Appartement* DVD

IGGY & THE STOOGES LIVE IN DETROIT

BY EDWIN POURCEY

In December 1981 at the Pentac Silverstone, Michigan, Iggy Pop opened for The Rolling Stones. He was booted off stage after performing only a couple of songs and the hall of objects that were thrown at him in that short time included a sweater Iggy was wearing and a bowling ball. More than two decades later, Iggy returns to Detroit with his original group. Now the Stones like houses instead of villains, and Iggy is only too happy to show his gratitude. "I'M SO

FUCKING GLAD TO BE HOME!" he yells at the top of his lungs before kick-starting the rest of the group into action with an electrifying version of "1969", the original anthem for all bored and frustrated urban youth, written and performed long before Nirvana had fired its first shot. This recent concert footage of the three original Stooges – guitarist Ron Asheton, drummer Scott Asheton and Iggy with Minuteman Mike Watt on bass guitar – is a joyous celebration. All are in the form as they are up through The Stooges' songbook with classics "TV Eye", "No Fun" and "I Wanna Be Your Dog", which they play twice. Second time around, sex player Steve MacKay is brought on, still blowing furiously on the same instrument he used on "La Blues", during the group's Funchouse sessions. The results is a massive blast of rock invaderism, with Iggy howling at the moon while Scott Asheton hammers an imaginary nail through his drum kit, and Ron Asheton adds high octane guitar feedbacks to complement MacKay's insanely squalling horn.

The "boring" material includes "Legends NY" in-store gig (where the trio performs on tour shows!) before a small crowd crammed into a New York record store. The audience is presumably to promote Iggy's Steel Ring album (posters for which are everywhere), but this is as close as you can get to seeing The Stooges unplugged. The atmosphere is intimate and the gig is educational, with Iggy stopping every other song

to explain the origin of the group's material. It's a genuinely human performance that is full of original rock 'n' roll spirit, proclaiming – as Iggy announces on stage at Detroit, "I AM NOT A PRODUCT! I AM YOUR!" Equally moving is basic player Mike Watt's journal, where he always plays how awestruck he felt to find himself playing in The Stooges.

There are none of the legendary Stooges stunts of yore here, like Iggy's peanut butter sneezing, mashed peas chest opening, or swishing silver river tins evening gowns – and definitely no bowling ball tossed at the crowd. But what happens on screen still makes you wish you had been part of the energy.

JOHN OSWALD CHRONOPHOTIC: CINÉMA DE L'IMMOBILE/MOVING STILLS: CENSUSO: L'ARC D'APPARTITION

CHM EDITIONS DVD+CD

BY MATT FIFTYTHREE

Though better known for his plunderphonics work and his reworking of the Gonzo Dead, John Oswald's interest in replication and repetition extends beyond the realm of music into other experimental media. As *l'Arc D'Appartement* – a piece of "chronophotic art" – brings into relief, the hub of these various projects is not so much the questioning and subversion of copyright, but a growing concern with unconventional forms of time. Like Brian Eno, Oswald is a conceptual, conceptual entrepreneur with an interest in inverting new forms of experience. Already in the 1970s Oswald dreamed of dealing with sound in such a way that it could be heard and read like a position laid out as a puzzle available for browsing. *l'Arc D'Appartement* (generated in response to a commission from a French-Canadian media company) eschews sound for image but keeps on that same uncertain borderline between still-life and movement. Since the mid-90s he has become increasingly fascinated with the idea of a portrait which has breath, or an auto-narrative film reduced to a certain kind of slowly generated movement. There is an influence here from computer screen savers,

but more distantly he appears to be working in a tradition that goes back to 19th century interludes such as living sculptures or tableau vivants.

Except for a "hacker" interview with Oswald about the piece, *l'Arc D'Appartement* is a wholly image-based construction for DVD whose central component is a portrait freeze – a frozen still life image of 80 individuals who fade into view in random groupings out of a white screen and then slowly disappear. Each figure may appear in a clothed or undressed state, and two or more figures may at times be mapped over each other in a kind of ghostly connection. The images were generated by approaching people in the street in Québec and asking them if they would participate in a photo shoot with clothes on and off. Out of 120 participants (who represent "census" and who include Donald himself and some of the studio personnel), Oswald assembled his final frame of 80 to be immortalised in this very slowly shifting, minimalist spectacle. The coming and going of appearances continues ad infinitum and no two "performances" of the piece will be the same. A separate menu page assembles all the participants in a single multi-layered crowd scene and starts to highlight one individual after another. Pressing "enter" on a remote will pause on that person and identify them by name. Other features, triggered by command keys, include loops "still lives" of Oswald's face, and that of producer Emile Monin, who stare fixedly out at the viewer. Each of these, in different ways, is a "moving still" – a term that Oswald hopes to explore as a new genre.

It's an extremely curious product, one which leaves the viewer at a loss as to how to engage with it. Is it to play somewhere in the background of a living room, or might one be drawn into a precarious position with it? More perplexing still is the mutability and anonymity of the piece, combined with the sense of life and motion allowed to a near standstill. Oswald has fixed the idea to three moments in films of the 40s and 50s when someone dies and the motor may hold their breath to give the impression of immobility. It is this kind of deathlike state that

suffuses the glossy group photo of everyday people here. On the one hand they are a kind of aristocratic elect; on the other, they are transfixed in a perpetual purgatory of the image – a cinema of the immobile. The project took shape in the same decade that cryogenic freezing emerged as a possibility.

Whisperfield is a separate audio project, but packaged with *l'Arc D'Appartement* and obliquely linked to its principle, here Donald has taken the idea of multiple participants in a static freeze and translated it into layers of whispered voices. Whispering is an analogue to that part of immobility in the portrait: speech is reduced to something vaporous or silent. The voices are so hushed that at first it's not clear what language is being spoken. All that stands out is the tutting of lips and tongues, the patter of indistinct phonemes. As with *l'Arc D'Appartement*, single voices are momentarily pulled into the foreground so that one catches fragments of their identity – "it's my mother's", "...colic c...", "...the longest it's been for about ten years..." – but these little points of intimacy are constantly sinking back into the abstract field of the whole, and there's some kinship here with Morton Feldman's areas of spontaneity within a larger controlled process. Every so often all the voices emerge into a total field of presence – the "whisperfield" – in which the human voice is reduced to a collective indistinct babble, abstract and sonorous as the rustling of leaves.

SHHH... SOUNDS IN SPACES NATIONAL VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

BY BRIAN DILLON

In 1916, in a viscosity and alarming tale entitled "The Moon Was", Gustave Apollinaire conjured up the ghost of Ludwig II of Bavaria. Entombed inside a mausoleum, the mad king strokes the keys of a fantastical musical instrument, drawing to his ears far the sounds of the world above. "The flawless microphones of the king's device were set so as to bring into this underground the most diabolical sounds of terrestrial life"; the muted



Expressway to yr screen: stills from *Sonic Youth's Corporate Ghost* DVD

southing of rural Japan, hissing geysers in New Zealand, the bustle of a Tibetan marketplace. Eventually, Ludvig levitates on a rolling current of sound and escapes his subterranean prison. Apophis's lunatic monach could fittingly have presided over the VJs' some reservation of its own space, during which it sometimes seemed that the museum's ambience, started by instant voices in the walls, might turn their way out into the Cowell Road, summoned to armed freedom.

It was the voices in *Shins...*, that set things most immediately into motion, voices that whisper, purr and babble from headphones which usually insure mere custodial guidance, but here leak dexterous, oblique instruction. In the Chinese Gallery, Jeremy Deller recorded Delilah's voice; the voice of a young girl looking, lovingly, her favourite animal sculptures. She's already way ahead of this listener, sketching an aural jungle around an audience who listen to claim the creatures. Delia, the song's preternaturally sensitive hunter, had already spied. Gillian Weaving uncovers a deeper bimbing in the interior of a 17th century London house, a space alive with the pop and sigh of ancient floodwaters. Weaving interviewed several visitors to this room before she found its perfect soundscape: the voice of a staff member whose childhood memories of a venerable prep school are easily reactivated in the living, breathing wood of a transplanted room. The effect is less one of nostalgia than of staking time travel: a sonic space out of Verne or Wells.

In the Cast Room, Jane and Louise Wilson tame the VJ's most resonant space into a lead of haunted building. The Cast Room could be the scolded-walked heart of the museum, a melancholy chamber in which the plaster ghosts of massive stone objects lie about like so many forgotten toys. These chunks of classical, Celtic and Renaissance art were replicated in the 19th century; from here, the whole museum feels like a collection of sourious tales. To this paradoxical space, the Wilsons add the sound of children playing on another abandoned fragment: the decaying concrete remains of architect Victor Pasmore's modernist Apollo Pavilion, Petetree. So



Expressway to yr screen: stills from *Sonic Youth's Corporate Ghost* DVD

many chronologies collide here, so much cultural ambivalence and hubris is both mocked and celebrated by these voices, that I was unprepared, on looking up at a distant corner of the room, to spot a huge patch of livid red paint peeling away, the museum's skeleton showing through.

That all of the above — the most vocally unctuous of the museum's interlocutors — are primarily visual artists, is a whispered hint as to the exhibition's less compelling voices. While the artists seem to have read the show's brief — a single room and a sonic carte blanche — as an invitation to open the museum to its own strangeness, the musicians are less often content to add a basal punctuation. Their contributions are often merely stodgy or ethereal. David Byrne's soft wistfulness (a store of mobile phones along a corridor, a wry toilet flu!), Elizabeth Fraser's unengaged latering in the Repast room, Cornelius's too glibly bimbing *Music For Glass Room*. Only Lenka's intestinal oddities probe deeper, the voices of the nearby tunnel from tube station to museum delivering ergonomic fragments of the outside. "She sent me a message..."

SONIC YOUTH CORPORATE GHOST: THE VIDEOS 1990-2002

0505160048827041 DVD

BY ROB YOUNG

On signing to Geffen in 1990 to make their first major label release *Goo*, Sonic Youth were favoured with a cash bonus intended to be used to make a series of video films to accompany the release. This was a sort of beauty appeared to stem from a recognition that SY held some kind of key to the next great youth marketing area yet to be tapped: Bratza. The style infests a couple of the promos that are included on *Corporate Ghost*, which assembles together 11 tracks from *Goo*, three made around the follow-up *Dirt* (1992), and tosses in a grab bag of more recent one-offs from subsequent albums right up to 2002's *Monkey Street*. Only "Kool Thing" appears to have been designed to



Expressway to yr screen: stills from *Sonic Youth's Corporate Ghost* DVD

make it to MTV, with its gleaming costumes, Kim Gordon crooning to a kitty and cameo from Chuck D. But even that weeded out, the station's conservative taste-makers. The rest of these phantom broadcasts allow us to see how SY's collaborative openness has extended into the film domain, with help from directors such as Todd Haynes, Spike Jonze, Richard Kern, Harmony Korine, Tamra Davis, Pivi Marttunen and Dave Markey. The DVD contains optional commentaries by the group to many of the cuts, which are largely illuminating on how the ideas were conceived and executed. Several feature additional commentaries from the relevant directors and occasionally bassist and frequent companion Mike Watt, whose musings have a habit of petering out as his mind seems to wander faster than his tongue.

The group claim "Dirt Boots" is their favourite of the edits. It's set in a rock club, and as they lay into some fearsome licks, a sneery scenario develops in the moshpit as a bristly slitter boy and cute Grunge girl exchange meaningful looks. After jumping up on stage for a little pre-ride face-sucking, they are ejected into the crowd in a pratfall slow-motion as the song breaks down into its dreamcock coda. This more conventionally styled narrative is the exception. Next up is "Invisi (Song For Karen)", directed by visual artist Tony Oursler, an associate of Mike Kelley. The group's tribute to the departed soul of Karen Carpenter is illustrated with comically primitive video effects such as a singing skull superimposed on Kim Gordon's face, then her face placed on top of a doll, and various leaden butchery on a blackened set that's a cross between the Children's Television Workshop and Czech Black Theatre. Todd Haynes's "Disappears" was the subject of some controversy when Tamra Davis re-edited his version (the director's cut appears as a bonus), but its amorphous nonchalance is one of the most memorable, as the group enjoy midl cosedressing and hemming in an automobile while playing with ergonomic code words.

All the group members have a crack at directing or co-directing, Lee Ranaldo's Postpunk work



Expressway to yr screen: stills from *Sonic Youth's Corporate Ghost* DVD

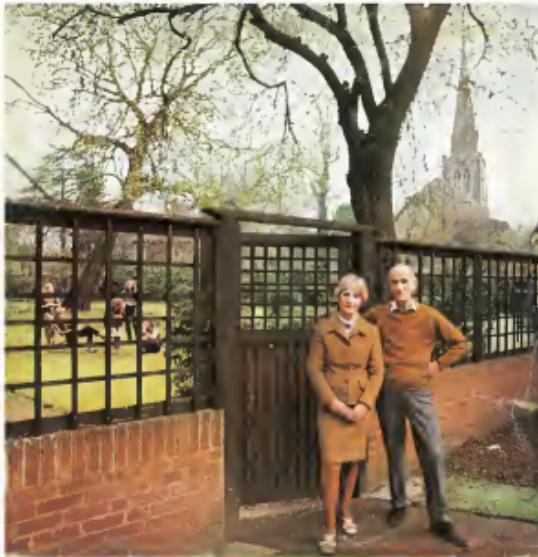
gives a haunting luminescence to "Mow"; Stew Shelley's abstract pen-on-celluloid colour whirls decorate "Mary-Christ", while in the commentary the members quiz each other banuously about their motives and methods. Goo found them on the cusp of changing times and phases: some of the more abstract voices seem to have come from the collage, dreamlike aesthetics of their 80s work like *Evil*, *Sister* and *Daydream Nation*, of jump-cuts, random footage of aero drops, collapsing buildings, dreamlike colour washes, lo-fi rehearsal takes. By the time of 1992's "Youth Against Fascism", they had emerged shaming in Bush (41) territory, with a feeling sense that the emergent Lollapalooza generation needed more concrete statements, and the Nick Egan-directed cut complements Thurston Moore's polemic ("The president sucks, he's a wet pig fuck...") with TV samples of the Ku Klux Klan, 1968 Punks not, and other inflammatory sequences.

In the later 90s and into the early 21st century, Sonic Youth have remained their rock edge, but lyrically have moved back towards the haze of signifiers of their early life, tempered with a wistfulness and sense of melancholy contemplation that befits their maturity. Lee Ranaldo's video of "Heartfoot", from 1998's *A Thousand Leaves*, is typical of this mood — Fango-style sweeps from a car window of middle-American suburbia in snowy states. "Disconnection Notice" is an oddity, with the music track submerged under a film of a youth quartet arguing in a tour van — you inevitably ask yourself, is this a re-enactment of a genuine SY argument or merely a playful subversion of the video as promotional tool? We shall, I suppose, never know.

These films won't take you a mile further out than the music already has, but are a valuable addendum to a familiar canon. The DVD indexing is awry in the second half — commentaries on a couple of tracks are inaccessible, one track ("Ball Is In The Heater") seems to be missing entirely, and the final one cuts off prematurely. A "Bonus" section includes a handful of bloopers videos made by fans in response to a competition held by Geffen, plus interviews with Todd Haynes, a mini-documentary and more bloopers. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by The Designers Republic's Ian Anderson



FAIRPORT CONVENTION UNHALFWICKING

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIC HAYES

I accept no hierarchy of influence. No best, no worst. I just like Unhalfbricking, here and now. And then it doesn't matter that I have no particular affinity with the music or that my choice yesterday would have been as different then as it will tomorrow. That it's a photograph by Eric Hayes covering an album by Fairport Convention is not important. I'm interested in the work not the creator, the story

rather than the teller; unless I'm telling. I didn't buy the album at the time. The truth is, I was seduced by the cover long before I dared exposing myself to the hoppy, naked, well-slapping pleasures of folk rock.

We met in David's Records in Brixton where I hung out after school with Spastics Propaganda, 10cc's *How Does Your Garden Grow?*, Led Zeppelin's *Presence*, and all the other covers I loved because they didn't look like other covers. Years on, I still don't see any value in designing something simply to be a record sleeve. I want to see good design applied to, not dictated by, format and I want to

experience work which does not approximate the popular misconception of The Designers Republic. I want to be surprised. Publicly I wish Unhalfbricking housed music I imagine. Who makes like myself might consider cooler, maybe the new One Man And His Laptop album; secretly I'm glad it doesn't.

It's special because it's as English as Margaret Thatcher's *Miss Marple* and because a younger me imagined 'unhalfbricking' to be a psychological term merrily coaxed up with RD Lang than with garden architecture, try looking at it as an image of subconscious psychological

trauma in Middle England rather than a 'scene' outside Sandy Denny's family pile. I love it that the Convention are hiding in the narrative rather than being the subject, and I love it that these gentle folk out of water can provoke such a queering response in me. 'Unhalfbricking', the album is that it portrays the opposite of my urban life, and represents something I keep out of reach — a typically English nostalgia for a past I never had. You see, the point is you're not seeing it how I do. Which is good. □

Ian Anderson is the founder of graphic design company The Designers Republic

Go To:

This month's cover boys Wilco and their record company WEA International were recently taken to court by UK experimental label **Indie-Discs** (www.indie-ds.com). Their crime? Sampling more than a minute of Indie's *The Covet Project*:

Recordings Of Shareware Numbers Stations (www.indie-ds.com/covet/). The sample appears on "Poor Places", a track on the Wilco's 2002 album *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. The offending part, stans Indie in a mazurka, is taken from "Phonetic Alphabet Nano", a track from the fear CD set where a woman is heard monotonously repeating the words "yankee, hotel, foxtrot". An out-of-court settlement followed.

Numbers stations are mysterious transmitters without any fixed frequency and with no regular

schedules, featuring voices reading seemingly random numbers and phrases in different languages. Especially popular during the Cold War but still in operation, these broadcasts can be heard by anyone in possession of a shortwave radio. The stations do not exist officially, and the theory goes that the words and numbers being broadcast are codes corresponding to information passed between intelligence agencies. The Covet Project collects some of these transmissions into a curious package.

Simon Mason (www.simonmason.karen.net/) is author of *Secret Signals: The Enigma Numbers Mystery*, and a major contributor to Indie's recordings. His sizeable website makes available lots of numbers station recordings, plus his book

on the subject, which is now out of print. There's also a wealth of video clips showing how to tune in to such stations and myriad links to related articles and the like for further exploration.

Blastface (www.blastface.com) is a multi-genre Webzine from Chicago. Especially obsessed with The Sun City Girls and the *Neon Saw Massacre*, its site contains a raft of reviews and articles (readily by a Larry "Fox" O'Donnell), an interview with Gary Lucas of *Destry All Monsters*, and a bunch of live reports of shows in Chicago. Other artists warranting a mention are Noxid, the late Angus MacLise (from whom they took their site's name), Charlanteables and, ex. Fair Worn Of Error. **ANNE HILDE NESET**



On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh





Facing page: Moja Ratko (top), Reacher Hawtin & Ricardo Villalobos at Sonar. Above left to right: Deathroll, Juana Molina, and Ryuichi Sakamoto with Pan Sonic and orchestra

SONAR 2004

BARCELONA VARIOUS VENUES

BY PHILIP SHERRIFFING & DAVID STURRS

Perhaps confronted with a slightly less cohesive – or at least, a less star-studded – line-up than in previous years, Sonar sent out a series of press releases in the weeks before the festival emphasising core genres like HipHop and Techno. This is hardly a bad thing: it's good to see the festival attempting to contextualise its selections, especially as the push of people attempting to get to a stage, any stage, sometimes leads to a kind of levelling whereby all entertainers are created equal.

But many of the most interesting moments fell well outside strict genre lines. The few hundred people who made their way to the offbeat tent of the SonarLab for the Teguiseño showcase were treated to two hours of exquisite selections, ranging from deep doses to uncommon funk-punk. Paris's Teguiseño has longly built its reputation upon its unusual mixes, releasing lost classics from the likes of Material, Gmx X, Ms Berlin and Cluster; so it made sense that instead of playing its back catalogue, as so many labels do in the SonarLab's DJ showcases, Teguiseño DJs Kim and Juana instead approached a definition of the Teguiseño sound by implication. Kim's hour assembled by means of half-stepping doses set over other doses and occasionally over programmed rhythms – at times, a slow, dirty house trip; at others, one of Koto's infectiously grooving dances the mile from Within. After her unsettling latencies, fused from Phil Niblock and Eastern-sounding tempos, Teguiseño co-operator Juana completed the connect, the deep heart of his label, beginning with Adrian Sherwood's improbable electro funk remix of Jones Blood Ultimo's "Eye Level" and coining directly into Arthur Russell's "The Parfum On The Ocean", Nick Drake's "River Man", and then My Bloody Valentine – a stolen course through slippage tracks that still managed to avoid any套裝.

For the second year in a row, Sonar replaced the Thursday night slot with a dose of high-concept, high culture, this year featuring Ryuichi Sakamoto and Pan Sonic accompanied by a symphony orchestra. Unfortunately the fusion of aesthetics felt negligible, and what

resulted instead was the sound of an orchestra playing popular classics, from Berio to John Adams, embellished by the pixel-wash of the laptop and electronic musicians. For one piece the tables were turned, as the orchestra performed an arrangement of one of Pan Sonic's own works, but to limited success. The Firm's filament-thin lead could barely hold the weight of the entire ensemble, which threatened to drag everything into a cacophony of ungainly rhythms.

As for Techno, the year's nighttime line-up presented Sonar's most adventurous selection of four to the floor dancé music in quite some time, beginning with Richie Hawtin's protégé Nagisa, continuing with the Giverny infested Detroit influenced tempos of Tim Wight – one of the few UK producers to be doing anything of note with the genre these days – and ending with the collaboration of Richie Hawtin and Ricardo Villalobos, a significant slot on Hawtin's annual solo set. That the two Berlin residents have been spending more and more time together was apparent from the way that Villalobos judged Hawtin towards deeper and deeper territory, away from the main room banging that Windsor, Canada's most famous export is known for, and towards a subtler, more nuanced vein of snapping beats, deformed climes, and teasing pleasure. Still, as they traded off, you could hear Rich returning his signature tricks – wild DJing, copious loops and applied effects, delay careening to the limits of control, B-reverberating to send the whole thing off beat, before swooshing and letting the bass take over. In the end, what united the two was bass – almost, to the point of comedy, but effective nevertheless. Detroit's Matthew Dear followed the pair, in what surely must be his biggest bilking yet, and his live laptop set made a hearty attempt to keep the 1000 plus crowd in thrall, but something was lacking, albeit almost imperceptible, through the laptop, lacking the full sound of well-mastered vinyl and the extended flow of a crack DJ, could not quite compete with the turntable's tried and tested paradigm.

OCBC – the arts complex in which the Sonar festival resides during the daytime – sits in modernistic splendour in the centre of Barcelona. Surrounding tenements, bombarded for several days by an incessant index of teles, unveiled art and Sonar banners from their balconies. This year's gaudy keynote imagery plastered

everywhere of a hotpanted, camera-wielding babe felt like a bizarre case of sexism masquerading as conceptualism and/or my daytime Sonar has too many events for any enthusiast to attend completely. Besides a full daytime screening programme, the exhibition venue – SonarMatica – hosted First Universal Micromotives, a four-ambassadorial show illustrating conceptual notions such as State Of Sabotage (SOS), Lubach related NSK and CM Van Hauswolff's Kingdoms Of Elgoland-Vorland.

SonarVillage, meanwhile, the central venue of the daytime event, extends from the ruins of an old church host. There are moments of euphoria – the resonant glitch of DJ Raspa – tolled across the Village arena on a blindingly sunny Thursday afternoon amid the sweat, dust and stench of scope, and catapulted you momentarily 50 years hence into an imaginary outdoor laptop.

While it's good that the lines between straight room and abstract electronics are so porous, the proximity of the venues is occasionally intrusive. So Sweden's Henrik Rylander found himself working with a smaller sound system in the SonarLab, with the more rhythmic boozing sounds of the main stage within earshot. His set, a playful synphony of racing engines, ought to have been inspiring and awakening your synapses. Under these circumstances, however, it's a little a underwhelming.

In the Sonar Hall, Pan Sonic generated foreboding landscapes of cyclical industrial noise, with the odd electronic intervention as the factory floor goes, leaving only a crater of date. The Pan Sonic duo worked in semi-darkness and hope to distract from their unmissable onstage appearance by blanking themselves with large screens and the slightly showman choice of abstract visual whilst collapse, distord and convulse in sync with the music. Yet still, the numerous onlookers watching the event fixed their cameras on the performers. Clearly the need for a human presence to be seen at the centre of even these musical operations can't quite be assuaged, feisty irrational as it is.

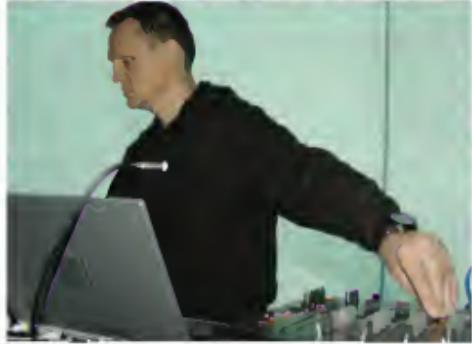
OCBC's Moja Ratko, by contrast, performing at the Sonar Complex, cut a much more striking appearance in a lime green top darkly emblazoned with the word "DESTROY". Despite the squalling, intense pitch of her electronic

concoctions, however, she didn't lipse imp theories. Her most ferocious performance one of the most pleasing spectacles of the festival is her concentration and restraint, as if the noises she unleashed had myriad lives of their own and she has to prevent them from boiling over or burning out, keep them shimmering and shrieking. The centerpiece of her set was a sustained avalanche of squalling, barking, maniacal radio noise waves, unsettling electronic kinks and fees, sampled sound, which, with glee and satisfaction, she brought slowly to a crescendo. That done, she rather sweetly took a bow.

Fellow Norwegian Deathroll made a rare solo appearance at the same venue. His band and general air of benign austerity were somewhat ironical. He sat at his keyboard as if composing luminous script. His performance drew occasionally from his recent first CD set but unfortunately didn't reflect its range. As his sounds loomed like distant weatherfronts, vast and grainy, like some transcriptions of old black and white Scandinavian meteorological photographs from the 60s. A shame that he didn't play about an hour longer.

Argentina's Juana Molina, despite her pedigree as a mainstream TV entertainer, didn't quite do justice to herself live. She was beat with sound problems but generally the off-centre chimes of her recent album translated here as tentacle and wobbly. Still, she's evidently built up a bank of guitar and received a sympathetic hearing. Mat Turens was an excellent delight. Despite, he didn't lose his cool that generously facilitated it. Wearing ridiculous yellow-mimmed shades he didn't come across as an attention-seeking buffoon, rather as someone infectious excited at the chance to perform, propelled by a deeply friendly urge to cut away any hauror or barrier between audience and artist. His songs still chop and change, are still impishly multifaceted clusterbombs of musical ideas, while he lingers away long before they're spent. Nowadays, however, he's discovered that if you stick with a groove for say, 30 seconds, the crowd will lose you for it. He's had a subtle pep fun – but God, with infinite chunky chutz to cut the set with a Saturday evening random that comblined the organisers, played havoc with the remainder of the evening's programme and brought Sonar to an undeservedly damp conclusion.

On Location



LE WEEKEND

STIRLING TOLBOOTH UK

BY NEIL COOPER

Almost midway between Glasgow and Edinburgh, Stirling is the ideal east meets west no man's land for a festival like Le Weekend. In budo with a loose-lit vibe, unlike the twin metropolises it satellites, it has no chips on its shoulder or snarly aims and groves, simply because it's neither here nor there. For seven years, such wonderful geographical incongruity has allowed Le Weekend space enough to breathe, and this year it stretched itself to four days.

This wasn't enough, however, for Daryl Markus Poos, scheduled to perform with socialist Enke Toyota as So At a Kings' exhibition in the neighbouring Charing Cross gallery, with lights booked, Poos got to the departure lounge and turned around at the 11th hour and duly went home.

Such pique doesn't discourage Thursday's opening act, The Hermit Drake Trio, a soft 'n' sawdust folk collaboration between the Chicago purveyor, veteran saxophonist Paul Dunmall and bassist Paul Rogers. Drake may have been listed as leader, but is content to cede to Dunmall's gurgling bawling tenor and Rogers' seven string sympathetic medieval

plackings, which at one surprising point bends its way into appealing approximations of analogous primroses.

Same soft indeed, however, compared to jazzmeister veterans Borbetomagus, whose two saxophones and FX onslaught from Dan Drieth and Jim Sauter mimics Donald Miller's prone but equally mashed up guitar for the ultimate tussoween. With eight ardetts apiece and an army of strap-on number hoses and plastic attachments, Sauter and Drieth are a twin headed devils' lair in motion. In contrast, Miller sits with his guitar or a scarlet covered table, dropping strings on its neck like some starbuckler. Hair Bear Bungle mad conjuring up equally clarioning assaults.

When Drieth drops a microphone into the bell of Sauter's axe, then pushes the two instruments together, so that they are effectively kissing, there's a whiff of homoerotic intimacy only 25 years together can convey. As Miller gets in on the act, forcing his guitar neck between them before falling backwards off his stool, the whiplash physics of the sound becomes a gloriously visual auralistic routine.

Friday night's New World America showcase is by far the most enticing proposition. Heather Leigh Murray's solo improvisation for voice and pedal steel guitar deconstructs her instruments' associations with deep-fried link-dinneries forever. Bathed in a crimson glow, Murray's contorted spiral chimes and gasoamer call and response builds to beguilingly eerie western wind crescendos that tooled keeping, when wading sailors home to shore. As she repeatedly stains

the flat of her hand down onto her guitar neck, Murray's altered state becomes the purring storm before an exhilarating calm.

More homegrown scatmonic babbles comes with The MV + EE Medicine Show, Mathew Valentine and Eric Elder's istlebag of stripped bone blues. With the look of a hobbled Peter Sellers and an equal feel for the ridiculous, Valentine's seavent wittinesses an over-sitizen by increasingly urgent ukulele, banjo and harmonica that makes like Normcore degrade of operatics.

If MV + EE sound is in the ribbed soaps Country twang of John Goodman's *Delevanace*, The Pits slow burning singing bowl and strings rage drives awaken the countercultural spirit of Antonioni's more hallucinatory *Zabriskie Point*, a film where an altogether more metaphysical East/West alliance exploded out of the wilderness.

Saturday afternoon finds eight local musicians, plus Don Drieth, working with composer Peter Dowling on the project Music For Buildings, a two hour jam, sampled live, then diffused throughout the Tolbooth's multi-folded expense. Despite slides into pedestrian avant Baroque whimsy, something near monumental occurs, and at one point in the calls an amplified guitar and violin loop appears to reinvent French nursery rhyme melodies.

Things quieten down for the evening session with Japanese vocalist Haze, who performed her *Ash In The Rainbow* suite with cellist Hiromichi Sakamoto. Muffled layers of sampled string textures pounding alongside Haze's street voice box manipulations make for high drama.

Admittedly hokey, her smile alone guarantees she's in possession of at least one parallel universe Eurotrash winner, as Hiromichi ends with a very Looney Tunes spot of wailing.

More cells follow from Enem Reppener, whose System D project with violinist Mala Syta and percussionist Seagie Gugie is an ideal South World junyouth soundtrack for a global village cop show. When Syta and Reppener prove the ales, the sweetest of unpreserved blessings are invoked.

There's final night disappointment as, due to illness, Lora Mazzacane Connors, set to play with Suzanne Lengle, cancels. At three hours notice, however, a histic Glenn Jones flies in from Boston to save the day. Looking giddily bewildered, he dedicates his set of delightfully miffed guitar pickings to the loss Joint Pahay. Accompanied on one number by Peet's Jack Rose on stage, Reppener gives way to joint jamboree, each sending with charming downhome humanity.

Finally, New Zealand's The Dead C, in their first ever UK show, whip up a glorified storm of relentless self destruction called from Bruce Russell and Michael Morley's sludge drenched two guitars. Robbie Yeats's pedal whup drum and cello and a suitably assiduous and crossbones emblazoned laptop. Here is a group that thrives on mutual suspicion, and only when set list confusion threatens implosion do they decide to acknowledge each other. As they find their bearings, out of the mists comes a thrilling party that gets enough to define space and place, a perfect, sudden full stop to a long but not lost weekend. □

Le Weekend: Borbetomagus, Glenn Jones with Jack Rose (top right); MV+EE Medicine Show, Peter Dowling (middle row); MUTEK sawy (bottom row); Carsten Nicolai, Joseph Stachy (left) Lenebech/Burnn Friedman

MUTEK

MONTRÉAL VARIOUS VENUES

BY PHILIP SHERBURN

Shortly before he was to take the stage on the Sunday evening closing performance at MUTEK, Geoff White came walking through the crowd, white as an alabaster and looking if 'Are you OK?' I asked him. 'Not really,' he said, and then pointed at the stage, where Burnt Radianas, Joko Lenebech and Joseph Sudry was spinning delicate cat's cradles of guitar, drums and electronics, owing musical threads into a form of sparkling clarity, despite its rhythmic complexity. This is close to perfection as music gets.

Admittedly, Friedman et al were a hard act to follow, but Geoff White, who performed as Aeroc, hadn't won his. His set of laptop bittersweet crackles beats and looped electric guitar, accompanied on several tracks by Ben Kenney, shone on its own. The rhythms were slightly punchier than on his recent Ghostly CD, *Visions*, and the infusion of live guitar lent jazz-inflected larniance without lapsing into 'jazziness'.

This was the fifth instalment of the annual Montreal festival, which showcases experimental digital music and minimalist House and Techno. The line-up ranged from the click 'n' crash of the

Raster-Noton crew to the unminimally deep disco House of Montréal's Moi, who predicted highlight after seemingly effortless highlight. Dividing this year between three venues – a theatre in the film centre Ex-Centre for experimental soundworks, the 2000 capacity Montréal nightclub, and the base, converted SMC lounge – the five day festival felt like well organised cogent blocks of ideas.

There was the 'pop' night, featuring Junior Boys and Schneider TM (as well as his Techno deconstructivist Smith N Hack, who in a sequence of deep loops and live edits, until everything that had come before them, turning the former artists' floppy electro-pop back into a heavily pruned tree of spindly branches and nutty stumps), there was the evening of uncompromising sonic experimentation, featuring analogue aficionado David Kristin, Pon Vassien, the duo of Vienna's Pure (via Peter Velutus of Isha Gold) and New York underground Johnny Dylan. There were all-set, all-night dance party – had it been outside, you could have called it a rite – featuring a line-up of stellar House and Techno producers including Egg, Cocorpus, Ileine and The Flip-Off Artist, which concluded with Mathew Herbert spinning one of the most perfectly euphoric DJ sets I've ever heard.

While more and more artists seem to come to

MUTEK prepared to break moulds and make bold statements, there were exceptions. The festival got off to an inauspicious start with a lackluster audio-visual performance from Montréal's Antimus. On their own, his drums and guitars might have created some sort of atmosphere, but they were overshadowed by unnecessary visuals that refreshes digital ariodance without engaging in actual aesthetic work.

One of the most anticipated events of the week also disappointed: Riché Hawer's *East*. Hawer's performance in nine years had been aimed as an unrepresented multimedia extravaganza. But after a late start, with Minus Reeves' Clark Wancer doing almost two hours of Ambient music, the Plastique live show was merely a fitful rehash of his classic Acid work, and the much touted visual assaults failed to work for more than half the set. When they did, they offered intriguing, even engrossing fusions of sound and vision, but they hardly announced a brave new realm of *Nu culture*.

But as always, MUTEK remained a resource for discovery, showcasing talented developing artists who have yet to gain much of a foothold in an international context. Among them were South African-born, London resident Portable, Montréal's tippant minimal Techno procurateur Frivolas, and the astounding duo Skoitz Kogen, whose leaglorm audio-visual performances

obliterate the lines between media, resulting in a kind of subjectivity that is undoing everything you think you know about the relationship between moving pictures and sound. Chile's Digital Nomster practically stole the festival with a HuShap influenced set of挂牌, out and piano House and growled vocals that had colleagues like Kriek and Boice laughing in front row.

It's a good thing that Jamie Lidell was plotted last, or there might have been no festival at all. His hour or so of a capella acrobatics – looped, processed, and occasionally relayed through a Marshall stack that gave his voice the quality of Heavy Metal guitars – veered from ANC rancid stylings to death gospel to an alleged *U2* cover, cresting to clams before clams, leaving the audience weakened and transfixed. When, toward the end of his set, he asked, "Who's next on the wheels of steel?", it was the funniest joke I heard that week. For a DJ to attempt to follow Lidell's scorching soul would be sheer ludicrousness. Lidell's appearance was less a performance of music than pure performance; less expression than exploration. In an unusual move for MUTEK, there was no after-party. When Lidell brought the curtain down, figuratively speaking, its weight like a leaden shroud, there was no question of further motion or further music. □



The Feedback Philharmonia (left to right): Alvin Lucier, Billy Rose, Sarah Washington, Otomo Yoshihide, Xentos 'Fay' Bentos, Toshiharu Nakamura

FEEDBACK: ORDER FROM NOISE

LONDON ST LUKE'S

UK

BY WILL MONTGOMERY

It seemed right that a concert dedicated to the ase-beckerts phenomenon of feedback — born when the output goes into the input — should begin with its best moment. This came courtesy of the event's preceding genesis, Alvin Lucier, whose experiments with audio have trodden an unnerving line between the artistic and the scientific since the mid-1960s. Lucier's precision sound work is highly sensitive to individual spaces and ambiances. The venue, the exquisitely nth St. Luke's Church, is an imposing space, and it looked more so in the final evening light after a violent June downpour. Lucier entered sporting a jacket and as he and two head-mounted microphones, he came and stood between the floor level seats and the naked banks behind them. He hunched, moving eccentrically, and looking, with his ample mustache, like a character who'd strayed from a

cartoon. The piece began: *Bird And Person Dying*, from the mid-1970s. The sound source is a toy bird emitting a high, descending tone followed by a ripple of twitters. This is broadcast from two loudspeakers, picked up by the performer's headgear and sent back into the mix. As the performer moves, even slightly, the nature of the feedback changes. The result was extraordinary — the simple source sequence was soon buried in a high-pitched feedback tone that modulated beautifully as Lucier paced slowly around the space. Bleatings, dissonances and the instability of the main tone turned the resulting output into a complex flow of sounds that never quite rid itself of the banal comedy of the point of departure, the tweet.

This disarming simplicity of conception and execution was not reproduced in any of the evening's other performances, which came from varying permutations of Otomo Yoshihide, Toshiharu Nakamura, Nicolas Collins, Billy Rose, Xentos 'Fay' Bentos, Sarah Washington and Rint Afemam, the curator of the show. The one- and two-performer events stood out, while the larger

ensembles tended to merge into unctuously squalls of electronic noise. Noise, though, was something that Otomo Yoshihide handled brilliantly on his own. His spot began with a violent jolt as he slammed a turntable needle down. His concluding DJ manoeuvres were loud and rhythmically uncomfortable for the listener in a way that few performers anywhere could make so pleasurable. It was as if he was reminding everyone present that the whole venture nakedly contemplated the angry behemoth of feedback. Not in his case, like that of Nicolas Collins, either. His performance, hard to see clearly from my vantage point, seemed to involve passing a right hand with telephone tape attached to it over a tabletop guitar and other devices. It was generally powerful but musically undramatic until, five minutes in, it erupted into lava-spewing techniques, notes binding, tones fuzzing into one another and curious harmonics bouncing off the walls. An impressively dorying piece.

The collaboration, in the second half of the concert, between Vietnamese video artist Billy Rose and Toshiharu Nakamura was also strong, if less

intense. Between them they made music that set delicate, sine-like tones off against rougher, choppier sounds. Rose's lo-fi feedbacking video was a rare example of an appropriate improvised visual accompaniment to live performance. After the best of the three larger ensemble pieces, one of which had foreseen noise for small sonic moves, Lucier returned to finish the show with *Music For Gamelan Instruments, Microphones, Amplifiers And Loudspeakers* from 1994. Four performers — Lucas Washington, Bentos and Afemam — each held bronze bowl-like banhangs over mounted microphones, producing a warm and resonant set of feedback tones. In front of them sat Yoshihide, Rose and Nakamura, plinking away with little hammers at gendens (xylophones like instruments). The piece depended on the constantly changing play between the isolated, chiming tones of the hammer wielders and the rich bed of wavering feedback chimes. If not quite as stunning as Dying, either as a performance piece or as sound, it was utterly engrossing nonetheless. Lucier looked pleased. We dappled our feedback. □



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Blocking photo: Aphex Twin at Oslo Jazz Festival

UK festivals

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SUPERSONIC

BIRMINGHAM

Audioslave festival that focuses on new experimental dance music. Friday night features Lake Vibes/Wagon Christ, Cyb, Nel, Lanestrum, Capsoul Vs The Legendary House Of God (23), while Saturday has three stages with live performances from Señor Cocorit And His Orchestra, Spoktron, El Soud, Chris Clark,

Paric DHH, Zanganiin, Panacea, British Under Boys, Christ, Keppie Vs Black Galaxy featuring Michael Butler, Saigon, Pratcheyways and many others as well as a film programme, exhibitions and record stalls. Birmingham Custard Factory 22-24 July, Fri £7 adv, Sat £18 adv, combined £23, 0121 248 2252, www.yoyohost.com, www.paste.org.uk

Kraftwerk, Lou Reed, Love with Arthur Lee, Wire, Electrelane, Trevor Jackson, Richin Howin, Thomas Fehrmann, Niglo label night featuring Tjark Novak, Rita & Tim Fronk, COH and Slae Letz alongside a myriad of indie, art, progressive acts. Bemusement, 5-8 August, EUR 152, www.florfb.com

ISEA

ESTONIA, FINLAND & BALTIK SEA

The new media symposium focusing on electronic arts, music and technology takes place this year in the harbour cities of Helsinki and Tallinn and on a multi-venue cruiser ferry. A collaboration with Montebello's MUTEK festival, *bergAurora's Music For Progress*, Clockhouse, Sholz, Koenig, Deadheat and DJ Charles Kiel. Other featured artists include Felix Kubin and underwater soundscapes created by Lünja and Roger. The festival also showcases

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SPAIN

Four day mainstream music festival on eight stages featuring a number of interesting artists including Alan Wilson, Enrolizende Neuhauser, further audiomax, tukker, behan, club god is an astronaut, god is an astronaut, northstation, thalamus, for updated information visit www.morfestival.com

demonstrations of new technologies by the world's media labs including interactive films, installations and wearable technologies. Melange and Tallinn various venues and cruiser ferry, 15-22 August, www.euro2004.net

JAZZ & MULHOUSE

FRANCE

Jazz and improvisation fest with Barry Guy, Co Shiell Seeger, Irene Schweizer & Pierre Favre, Leesa Solaia's Noposa Wabi, Nancemans trio, Corseil Sauer, The Thing with Joe McPhee, Christine Wodzicka, Xu Fengya, Eugene Chabouras, Le Xu, Andy Moore, Fred Van Hove and others. Mulhouse, 22-26 August, 00 33 8925 2332, www.jazz-mulhouse.org

JAZZ EM AGOSTO

PORTUGAL

Annual festival pushing the new jazz envelope. Now Orchestra directed by George Lewis (3 August), Peggy Lee Band (4), François Houle Electroacoustic Quartet, The Thing (5), Ohmo Vorfrid's New Jazz Quartet featuring Mats Gustafsson, Görner Baby Seminar (6), Franz Haudingen Regenschein XI, Morten Tønnesen & Øystein Volden, Arve Henriksen (7), Paul's Com Orchestra, Paul Plimley & Lise Ellis and Nuno & Jesus Sanzendeira (8), Lisbon Centro de Arte Moderna, 3-8 August, 00 35 1 217 823 475, www.jazzportugal.pt

MID FESTIVAL

IRELAND

Audioslave adventures with Adren, Philip Jeck, Candie Hawk, Umbrella Spokes, Silver Bullet featuring Radcliffe Man, Debaser and others. Charleville Castle, Tullamore, County Offaly 21-22 August, EUR 65 (including camping cost and booking fee), www.morfestival.com

NOISECAKE

NETHERLANDS

Second day of noise action housed in a sequated flight control tower at a former airport. Extreme performance from an international army of artists including Low-Bit, Jen Keller, Carsten Volmer, Goldthorn, Ystaka Mairina, MC Kettle And The Singing Sash, Spennakat and others plus an

installation by Jasper Van Der Naald. The Hague, 21 August, 4pm-3am, www.noisecake.nl

NORBERG FESTIVAL

SWEDEN

Swedish electronic music festival embracing a range of styles from Ambient to noise plus at the cuts, ticks and beats in between. Artists include Feneaux, Stinaann Håkansson, Lake Vibert, Philip Jeck, Paul Di Roza, Metal Hacking and Danza Summer plus label showcases and a heavy accent on Soundscapes artists. Norberg, 28-31 July, www.nofestivals.com

OSLO JAZZ FESTIVAL

NORWAY

Annual Oslo jazz bash featuring mainstream jazz and avant-garde sounds alike, spread over various venues in the Norwegian capital. The Blå club space hosts a Matsumoto Sapejazz (jazz) label launch night with The Thing, a punk rock inspired jazz featuring Mats Gustafsson, Paul Nilsen-Lee and Ingobert Håkken Risten (12 August), an edesco night featuring Chicago jazz giant Fred Anderson, electric avant-folkers Spectrum and Four Leaf (13), and a Saturday night broadcast with Mats Gustafsson & Hamid Drake, Fred Anderson & Paul Nilsen-Lee, LCD Sound System and Mental Overdrive (14). Other highlights of the festival include a Rephlex night (featuring Aphex Twin, Luke Vibert and Russell Haswell) plus Farmers Market and Nito Petar Molar. A number of the events to be held at Blå will be sponsored by The Wine Oslo various venues, 9-15 August, www.oslojazz.no

TRANSBAY SKRONKATHON BBQ

USA

Fourth annual summer barbecue featuring Berkeley's "academic, impenetrated, non-standard mass" practitioners. You bring the food, they provide the grill. This year's shenanigans include Josh Allen & Damon Smith, Ad hoc Microtonal String Quartet, Steve Casey, Amar Chawla, Alexander Cott & Oliver Herkenhoff, Matt Dawson, Ernesto Diaz-Infante, Thee Fafadans & Nina Egerl, Ghost In The House, Lizard King, Scream, and others plus an

Philip Greenfield, Scott Grahams-Lancaster, Greg Oter & Will Grint, Jim Ryan & Andrew Wishnus's Takemba, Skronkath West, Moe Staiano & Vicki Gross and tholom. Berkeley Jazz House, B August, 12:30-11pm, free, 001 510 649 8744, music.ame.com

Special events

THE DEATH OF NERO

UK

The Resonance Radio Orchestra presents a saudouphonic opera, as part of the Shoreditch Festival, with texts by Ed Bauer after Tolstoy, Sutrovo and De Quincey. Performers include vocalists Vivi Cormagham, Kay J Grant, Marlyn Singleton, Jill Tipping, actor Dean Deen Barn, musicians Tom Basby, Ben Drew, Alfredo Gavasa, Mia O'Brien, DJ 2 Tuff and Chris Weaver plus madmen engineers Kenosis and Tom Wallace. The performance will be broadcast live on Resonance 104.4 FM (with live streaming, www.resonancenf.com), London Hoxton Hall, 1 August, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 7684 0860, www.resonance.com

DEEP LISTENING RETREAT

USA

Composer Pauline Oliveros's 14th annual retreat and workshops in New York's Catskill Mountains. At the retreat Oliveros — along with Ione and Heloise Gold — will guide participants through a mixture of listening and sounding meditations, breath work, dream work, composition, visual arts, ritual, discussion and movement (1-7 August). The three workshops which follow the retreat are led by William Baroni, who specializes in didgeridoo, traditional and experimental music (8-12), Torre Heiba, who specializes in traditional and experimental shakuhachi, dance and innovative electronics (13-17), and Bob Bielecki, specializing in audio art and design (18-22). New York Big Indian Retreat Center, \$600 retreat, \$400 per workshop, 001 845 338 5984, www.deeplisten.org/training/retreat.html

HAFLER TRIO

UK

Three consecutive evenings of Hafler Trio events featuring the *Neumes Of Doings...*, events in June, described as "the only da da salon held this century so far". At the three events (titled If You Can't Fight, Get A Big Hat, Did Forget My Head If It Wasn't Tied On, and Ned Three Times 27 Years From Now) you can expect sound, light and actions from Hafler's always unpredictable Andrew McKeown (London Ridge) Steiner Theatre, 27-29 August, 8pm, £5 per evening and available from phonomenograph.net, 020 7723 4400, www.brunswicked.com/13a

OPEN/CLOSE

UK

Richard Crow and Lucia Farinotti present a celebration of the house that was home to the *Initiation Of Rot*. The exhibition will consist of small installations and works on CD/DVD by invited guests and visitors, including sound artists who have lived and worked within the house including The Hafler Trio, Adam Schenin and Paul Obermeier. London 109 Collett Street NW, 1-5 September, 12-6pm, free, 0781 459 2152, excavate@excavate.com

SHHHH...

UK

Live performance and Dis In The Victoria and Albert Museum with Kevin Bleckdon, Colleen, DJ Food, Max Tanda, Leila and SFT London Victoria And Albert Museum, 27 August, 8:30-10pm, 020 7842 2211, www.visit.ac.uk

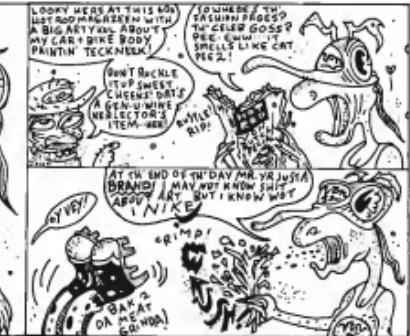
SUMMER JAZZ CYCLING TOUR

THE NETHERLANDS

18th edition of this one day festival allows cyclists in the Dutch Rietveld valley to take in a range of top jazz acts, improvised and creative music over 24 concerts in medieval churches, old castles and barns. RONN Saxophone Quartet, The Viermander Five, Tobias Delius, Cor Fuhrer & Hanno Drake, The Ex & Han Bennink, Ba Baas & Jocet, Babs Drukker, Barry Guy, May Homburger, Detlef Manderlaerd/Wollo's World, Luc Ex & Robles and many others. Groningen

Trip Or Squeek

HERE'S A FISHY TALE ABOUT A FAMED 60'S KUSTOM KULTURE ARTEEST-A FATHIN LIZARD READ IT AND POOP!



Aug The Spitz

14 Aug

Fonda

500

A Strange

Fruit promotion of what
Careless Talk Casts Lives calls
"the best band on Earth".

15 Aug



Spitz TV

Spontaneous

pop experimentation from
Now, awesome Japanese
address from Camanechi and
fairy noise synth from the
Analag Girl.

18 Aug

Blurt + Miasma
& The Carousel
of Headless Horses

26 years since

conception, Blurt's
frazzled & funky
sax-fuelled poetism
is as inspiring as ever



Kraftwerk at Brixton Academy (left); Stereolab warm up for Reading

Reading Valley various venues, 28 August, 00:31
50-403 06 62, www.qdt.nl

7930 3647, wwwica.org.uk

GEREK BAILEY/MICK BECK

PAUL HESSION
Quality Improv meeting which will feature the
clipped obstetrics of Bailey on guitar, Beck on
tenor saxophone and bassoon, and Hession's
rolling percussive attack. Sheffield Greper (20
August) and Leeds Adelphi (21)

CHARLIE HADEN NEW LIBERATION

MUSIC ORCHESTRA
Cecilie Coleman's bass player has reformed the
ensemble he put together in the 1990s with
Carla Bley. The group now features Hadon and
Bley along with players from New York's
contemporary jazz scene including Curtis Fowlkes
on trombone. Edinburgh Queen's Hall, 2 August;
Bryn, £21.50/£18, 0131 668 2019;
www.ceciliecoleman@virgin.net

LOONON IMPROVISORS' ORCHESTRA

Mostly known for the caper's improvising
ensemble performing conductors and other
one-off, spenned compositions. London Red
Rose Club, 1 August and every first Sunday of
the month, 10pm, £5/£3, 020 7265 7265

LOU REED

Only UK date on the rock 'n' roll animals
European tour. London Hammersmith Apollo, 17

August, £30, 020 8769 8660, www.loureed.org

NICIEOLSC + WE'RE BREAKING UP

Two outfit's creating in electronics and vocals –
one a New York duo, the other the project of
London's Michael Rodgers who runs the Tee
Thousand And I label. London Foyles, 22
August, 8pm-midnight, £4, 020 8721 8793,
www.nicieolsc.com,
www.london-improv.com

SONIC YOUTH

The Famous Five on the UK leg of an ongoing
European tour. Glasgow Barrowlands (1
September) and London Brixton Academy (2)
www.sonicyouth.com

STEREOLAB

The Anglo-French avant popsters play a warm-up
show for their Reading Festival appearance.
London Garage, 24 August, £12, 020 7607
1818, www.stereolab.co.uk

STREET LEVEL HIPHOP FORUM

Grassroots hiphop actos. Mu's Family/Busenwo, DJ Flip, J Aphrodisiac & The Coming, DJ Morphingle,
Pfli Fly Cypher, DJ L Bloopie, Stemekies Kint,
Sebaceous Elements/GM Ibelby, The Unpeople,
Double Negative, United Variations. London
Cargo, 8 August, 8pm-midnight, £5/£5, 020
7379 3440, www.cargo-london.com

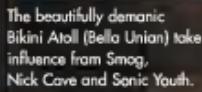
LUKE VIBERT/WAGON CHRIST

A laptop set from the shape-shifting electronic
pioneers. Edinburgh Bongo Club & Moray House
with m - 26 DJ set (27 August) and London Cross
Central Event (29)

Club spaces

BACK IN YOUR TOWN

Spring Heel Jack's Ashley Wales and trumpet
player Ian Wilson converse this excellent
monthly improvisation series. This month's one-
off, all-star big band features Wales and Wilson
with Lou Capillo, John Cowan, John Edwards, Paul
Rutherford, Pete Read, Peter Marsh and Reen
Vosloo. London Red Rose Club, 19 August and
every third Thursday of the month, 8-11pm,
£5/£3, 020 7263 7265



The beautifully demonic
Bikini Atoll (Bella Union) take
influence from Smog,
Nick Cave and Sonic Youth.

29 Aug Lektrolab

Ideasfactory and
Lektrolab present
free DJ workshops
and an evening of
electronic music.



Spitz.co.uk 109 Commercial St E1
box office & info 020 7392 9032

FREE FORM

New Manchester improvised music space. This month: Gahan Clark's Improv String Quartet plus piano player Dave Jackson. Manchester Upstage at the Brian's Protection, 5 August, 8:30-11am, £3, 0161 226 6062, www.freewave.co.uk/freeform

GLOBAL HEADFUNK

Each funk-laden international beats. Bengali breakbeat, African Were Goose, French regga and Brazilian drum 'n' bass from residents Tim Whelan, Samregi Rajpal, Nelson Dilston and Spinbit. London Hotel, 11 August and every second Wednesday of the month, £2.50/£2 or free before 10pm, 020 7613 4462, www.therelax.com

HERBAL

Forward-looking groov sessions including: Musical Propaganda's revolution dub, underground HipHop and reggae funk (4 August), Groov's drum 'n' bass with Grooverider, Flight DJ SS and MC Rage (8), Global Head Funk's international cocktails (11). Herse features new drum 'n' bass from Critical Recordings (11). Monthly's monthly leftfield night with the Shaka Sound System, Marty Sklab, Andrew Weatherall and Rev Milo Speedwagon (13), London Herbal, 8pm, prices vary, 020 7613 4462, www.therelax.com

IVYDUKYKWC

This month's name for the Bahman brothers' informal improvised and experimental music gathering. The programme features Michael Rediger/Ross Lambert/Daniel Buban, Adam Bohman/John Lely/Paul Hood (2 August) and Alie Tackier/Ronald Waddy/Paul Taylor (16). London Bloomsbury Centre, Mondays, 8pm, £4/£3, 07904 067409

MISO

Glasgow's monthly night for new electronica features Iain and Marcie Blaize School For Girls Glasgow 13th Note Cafe, 7 August and every first Saturday of the month, 8pm-midnight, 0141 552 1638, www.13thnote.co.uk,

www.iloveitso.com

THE ORCHESTRA PIT

Eclectic bi-monthly adventurous music night featuring Ted Mizer's 'sax' 'n' wad Blurt, Gaap solo-off Moiraa and The Carouse of Headless Horses, plus a live solo performance from Alex Ward on guitar and voice. Please note the new venue for this event, London The Spitz, 18 August, 7:30-11pm, £6, 020 7382 9032, www.iloveitso.com

OTHER MUSIC

Sheffield Improv presents here have the Greek And Delito duo of Chris Conn on bass clarinet and James Dunn on circuit-bent electronics and Innitus analysier supported by the duo of Noah Phillips from the US on classical guitar and Mick Beck on reeds (Sheffield Over The Top, 4 August), and Daniki Bailey/Nick Beck/Paul Hession (Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind, 20), www.sheffield-improv.co.uk/ othermaniacs.com

RAY'S JAZZ AT FOYLES

Monthly session of free improvised music concerts in the relocated sword shop and cafe continues with a new meeting of two string players – Simon Hoff on double bass and Manooi Matos on cello. Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 26 August, 7pm, free, 020 7340 3205, www.rayjazz.co.uk

UPGRADE A& AFTERLIFE

New Cambridge night for experimental, improvisation and DIY music kicks off with Dead Rat Orchestra's free folk and Improvisation aesthetics, United's mix of guitars, electronics and visuals, and pdts' 'handheld microsound dots and loops'. Cambridge CB2 Basement, 25 August, 8:30pm-midnight, £2, 01223 564728, www.upgradeandafterlife.co.uk

BIG

Music and arts collective's audiovisual monthly features off-kilter pop from Piney Giri on recorder, melodeon and pocket keyboard, Gavie & Delate plus interactive DJ sets and video projections. London 291, Gallery, 13 August, 7:30-11:30pm, free, 020 7613 5676, www.BIG.co.uk

Incoming**ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC**

2004

USA

Last September The Wire hooked up with Chicago's Empty Bottle venue to present a five day festival of outsider sounds under the banner, Adventures In Modern Music. It was such a success that we are doing it again this year. As in 2003, the festival will be spread over five days and feature a stellar line up. Boom Bip, Oxbow, Axel Dörner/Franz Hettlinger/Kerstin Rowe and Leafcutter John (22 September), Gilt Of Gato, Soes, Lesser Manhang and Dawu Redbad Tridat (23), Befortheranga, Terle Ti Alvi, Pest! Nitsoe-Love & Ken Vandemark and The Once And Future Hounds (24), Thomas Brinkmann, Signings, Kerri Fullerton Whitman and Enhance (25), Ghost, Xu Xu, Nosaj and Double Leopards (26). Chicago Empty Bottle, 22-26 September, www.emptylottle.com

GUELPH JAZZ FESTIVAL & COLLOQUIUM

CANADA

Community powered international jazz and New Music festival which considers active debate a key part of the proceedings. Workshops, panel discussions and lectures mingle with performances on the street and in restaurants. This year features Archie Shepp with Roswell Rudd, Reggae Werkman and Andrew Cyrille. Sase Ibara Trio, Sakieko Naruchiyak with William Parker and Harold Driskell, Bob Ostertag with Peter Hilbert and Theo Bleckmann, Andrew Cyrille's Pictures Of Time with Don Moye, Obo Addy and Okeraena Asaatic, John Devine & Joaao Hoxa, Jozie (Leanne & India Cooke), and many others. The keynote talk is by Archie Shepp. Guelph various venues, 8-12 September, 001 519 763 4952, www.guelphjazzfestival.com

KLANGWALD

LATVIA

East European experimental music event featuring Keith Rowe, Karle Matthews, Rodan, www.klangwald.com

Free-mall, Spunk, Carl Michael Von Hausswolff, plus local artists from Latvia and Lithuania and a film and video programme. Riga Theatre and Music Museum, 3-4 September, www.klangwald.com

SOUNDS LIKE NOW

USA

Major celebration of New York's avant garde with Alvin Lucier, Robert Ashley, Jean La Barrie, George Lewis, Prill Hinson, Pauline Oliveros, Larry Jenkins, Nicolas Collins, Fast Forward, Mark Dresser, David Behrman, David Rosenboom, Leatha Sonam, Anna Lockwood, Roscoe Mitchell, Michael J Schumacher, David First, Tom Hamilton and others. New York La MaMa and other venues, 14-17 October, www.interprets.org.info

Out There News for the September Issue should reach us by 30 July

D.O.R Motion + Time Tour

Adelton

Aldridge

animal station

Martin Picton

Saturday 14th August 2004, commencing at 12:00 on the beach - Drivé Picturesque Theaterfestival Boskamp 't Hertogenbosch I Netherlands

www.dor.co.uk/motion-time.htm
www.dor-nl.nl

BBC MERSEYSIDE

9.08 FM, 1485 MW

PMS

Sunday midnight-2am freewheeling mix of avant sounds

CABLE RADIO 89.8 FM
(MILTON KEYNES)**THE GARDEN OF THIRTY DELIGHTS**
Friday 10pm-midnight, Edictic avant mix**JUICE 107.2 FM (BRIGHTON)****TOTALLY WIRED**

Sunday 11pm-1am, Leftfield new music

XFM 104.9 FM (LONDON)**FLO-MOTION**

Sunday 10pm-midnight, Leftfield electronica

UK Radio

RESONANCE 104.4 FM

www.resonancefm.com

The London Musicians' Collective's music and arts station continues to set the pace for adventurous broadcasting in the UK. Highlights from the current schedule include *Small Flat Records Show* (Mondays, 2pm), *N. West Music* with Art Berry and Amber Dawn (Mondays, 5pm), *Coriolis Solid Steel* (Mondays, 1pm), *New music* in Onkyo (presented by Paul Hobart) (alternates Tuesdays, 8:30pm), *Korenspace* (presented German sounds and space music) (Tuesday, 10pm), *Fifty-Fifty Sound System* (host a reggae and dub showcase (Tuesday, 11:30pm), *the Rough Trade Show* air new releases (Thursdays, noon), *The Anachord Music Hour* with Reg Hall (Burrndale, 2pm). These presents the unpredictable *Bernard Triangle* (Thursdays, midnight), Ed Pivnen presents *Sound Projecting* (Fridays, 5:30pm), Peter Causick and Isabelle Custer's environmental recordings show *Verstehen Sounds* (alternates Fridays, 8:30pm), *Negativland's Extraneous* Over The Edge relived live from KFRK in California (Saturdays, 4pm-9pm), *Concrete Music Hour* (Saturdays, 6pm-7pm), *Horizon & Phrygian's semiannual solo open* (Saturdays, 6:30pm), *Richard Thomas's radio art show Baravily (alternate Saturdays, 8pm), Clive Grahams' *Sound Poets* (Sunday, 6:15pm), Dan Wilson's home-made recordings show *Hollowbox* (Sunday, 10pm) and John Duncan's radio art show *Credit Radio* (Sunday, 11:30pm). Other ongoing broadcasts include *The Micro's Adventures In Absurdity* (Mondays, 9:30pm) and shows by our contributors *Barry Watson* (8pm-10pm), *Dot & Lurch*, *Wednesday, 2pm*, *Savage Pestil* (Giggers with Shorne, Gé, Taxellos, Spin) and *Nike Barnes* (*Scratching The Surface*, alternate Tuesdays, 8:30pm). Broadcasts across Central London noon-1am, seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times. Home-quality Web streaming and full listings at www.resonancefm.com*

BBC RADIO 1 97-98 FM**JOHN PEEL**

Tuesday Thursday 10pm-midnight

Leftfield music across the board

GILLES PETERSON

Thursday midnight-2am

Post Acid jazz

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM**LATE JUNCTION**

Monday Thursday 10:15-midnight

New Music compendium

JAZZ ON 3

Friday 11:30pm-1am

Modern jazz in session and concert

HEAR AND NOW

Saturday 11pm-1am, New Music magazine

MIXING IT

Friday 10:15-11:30pm

Hyper-edictic mix of avant sounds

BBC LANCASHIRE

95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 855 MW

ON THE WIRE

Saturday 10pm-midnight, The Wire's club columnist Steve Barker mixes it up weekly!

Links to Net radio broadcasts can be found on The Wire Website: www.thewire.co.uk

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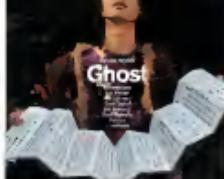
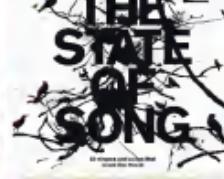
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Virgin sampler (available with issue 152)
Live & Direct 98 (available with issue 187)
Domino On The Wire (available with issue 189)
Evan Parker's High Tide CD-ROM (available with issue 195)

Maldon's Draw Me A Riot (available with issue 208)
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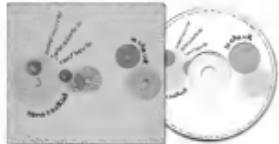


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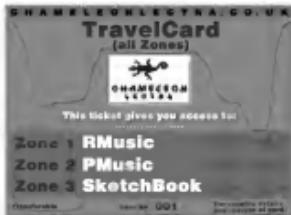


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Epiphanies

The careering poptones of PiL on TV derail
Keith Moliné's Prog rock ambitions



Chequered careers (left to right): PiL's Keith Levene, Adys Lydon and Jah Wobble

It's round midnight, September 1977, in the back of the family car. We're approaching the end of the three day journey from Madrid, the vibrant Spanish capital where I've lived for a few magical years, to our new home of Aldershot, a grimy no-hope town in the London commuter belt. I peer out into the Hampshire black. Rain streaks the side window. I'm only 11 years old, but I know that's it for my childhood idyll. The radio has been on for a while now, but I'm dozing, depressed. Until a ragging, hypnotic, thumpingly nasty guitar riff inuates itself into my slumber, and I start to listen: it's the intro to *The Sex Pistols' "Pretty Vacant"*.

That's where my epiphany starts. It's kind of a slow burner, if it's possible to have a slow-burning epiphany. See, in this story I don't immediately become a preteen punk and start gobtong at traffic wardens. I see pictures of Johnny Rotten in *NME* and think he looks like an owl (remember, this was way before he actually became one.) On top of the stresses of my lifestyle upheaval, *"Pretty Vacant"* is an epiphany I'm not quite ready for.

I've spent those three exapt years cut off from pop culture, developing an unhealthy interest in the Prog rock albums borrowed by my older brother from his friends, or more likely the older brothers of his friends. By the age of ten, untouched as I have been by successive pop crazes sweeping through Britain, my favourite group is King Crimson. In the eyes of my new English schoolmates, and quite possibly everyone else, this makes me some kind of pitiable freak. Over the first few months in Aldershot it becomes blindingly obvious that it's impossible for me to fit in. And so, like countless other playground misfits down the ages, I stop trying, convincing myself that I am different, that I am right and they are wrong, clinging to my Prog rock certainties like a musical security blanket, regularly chanting the itchy: pop is pop, disco sucks and punks can't play their instruments. Except for that bit at the beginning of *"Pretty Vacant"*.

I fall in with some other misfits and coerce them into forming a succession of bedroom groups with names

like Erosion and Blue Stratos (the latter named after the pubescent boy's aftershave of choice). We bolt together all the clunking riffs we can come up with to form 20 minute epics of breathtaking awfulness, with loud sections called "The Battle" and slow bits called "The Aftermath". We get fairly competent – indeed, our lead guitarist Rasheed (13) remains to this day the fastest I've ever heard, making John McLaughlin sound like Toku "Slowhand" Sugimoto – and my God are we insufferably smug. We are utterly dismissive of "commercial", "unoriginal", "simple" music, the kind of thing that "anybody can do". But still, this memory of the strange, insidious violence of *"Pretty Vacant"* nags away at me.

Being labelled "weird" acts as a subconscious spur for me to seek out *"weird music"*, which leads me inevitably to Brian Eno. Blue Stratos are divided as to his merits. On the plus side, he's made records with Robert Fripp and has people like Percy Jones and Phil Collins on his albums. Less encouragingly, he wears feather boas and calls himself a "no-musician". Another key recording is Henry Cow's side of the Greasy Truckers collection, our first exposure to Free Improv, which we agree is unlistenable, yet which I keep listening to, full of questions – is this "simple"? Can "anybody" do it? I insist on sandwiching a similarly wild interface between "The Battle" and "The Aftermath", which the group club "The Wank". The tablets of stone on which are carved the commandments of Prog rock are starting to crumble. In my head, *"Pretty Vacant"* is sounding more insistent now.

And then the real epiphany happens. Johnny Rotten has laid the groundwork, but it's John Lydon who supplies the killer blow. PiL appear on TV's Old Grey Whistle Test, and the ragging voice of doubt he first planted with *"Pretty Vacant"* becomes an utterly convincing call to arms on the group's incredible versions of "Poptronics" and "Careening". Jah Wobble's distorted dub bass slacks the massive spaces laid waste by Keith Levene's scathing guitar figures and synthesizer walls. Lydon's distressed cry and harrowing wail – the line "I'll never forget the

impression you made/You left a hole in the back of my head" is apparently delivered by a naked corpse in a forest – is so alien and compelling that I'm left staring at the screen in gawking amazement. It's all so messy and confrontational. Levene openly brandishes the manual for his synth, parading his lack of ability with gleeful relish. This isn't like Eno, that's for sure, with his obvious compositional prowess masquerading as non-musicianship. Nor is it Henry Cow Improv, non-music played by people of immense technical skill. It's even beyond punk, which to my ears is just condensed Heavy Metal played high and tight. PiL are loose, sprawling, so startlingly wrong, but possessed of an originality that goes far beyond what I've previously understood by the word. Sure, King Crimson are original in that they don't sound like Yes or National Health or any of my other Prog faves. But PiL barely sound like music at all. Later I'm on the phone to Rasheed, breathless with excitement – did you see it, did you see it? – but he can only reply: that guitarist was so SLOW.

It was all epiphanies after that. Now the floodgates were open, every month brought new discoveries: the choked electronica of Cabaret Voltaire, the spiky borsos of Anton Webern, the infernal ecstasies of John Coltrane, each discovery accompanied by a year long vinyl cult that tears tears to my eyes to think about today. The offhand strangeness of PiL gave me a taste for a particular kind of experimental gain in music, and inspired me to investigate other leftfield arts and ideologies.

But epiphanies can have their downside. Apart from the great albums lost to the record and tape exchange – what wouldn't I give to get back my copy of Egg's avant-Caribou classic *The Police Force* – I stopped bothering to develop my musical chops, favouring instead a Levene-like sloppiness that I've yet to lose (as anyone who has heard me play recently will no doubt confirm). Worst of all, fired up as I was with revolutionary anti-Prog zeal, I was summarily and unceremoniously kicked out of Blue Stratos. □ Keith Moliné is one of *Two Pale Boys*

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